CHARLIE ROGERS

PURSUED BY BULLDOZERS

COMPILED BY
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EDITED BY
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“I feel like I have spent much of my career
pursued by bulldozers.”
Charlie Rogers

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Prologue

The recent discovery of a collection of work by Gateshead artist Charles Henry Rogers

Brian Rankin

United by seven iconic bridges across a bustling Quayside, Newcastle and Gateshead was a likely source of inspiration for any local artist. Charlie Rogers was a self-taught artist from Gateshead. The streets and back lanes of Tyneside provided valuable inspiration for his subsequent paintings, watercolours and sketches.

Bigg Market, Newcastle. Charlie Rogers at his finest

Over a period of 60 years he produced a substantial, recently discovered body of work.

Charlie recorded in pictures much that is now a memory. His legacy lives on and will provide future generations and academics with a comprehensive record of the social, economic and industrial landscape of Northern England during the second half of the 20th century.

'Any worthwhile art, music, song, poetry or prose, must have its roots in emotion.'

Charlie Rogers.

The collection of paintings and sketches will offer future generations the opportunity to be taken back in time to a period of rapid social change to the urban landscape of many towns and villages in northern England.

A large number of the buildings and everyday scenes painted by Charlie Rogers no longer exist. The paintings are a tribute to the millions of ordinary working class people, many of whom struggled to cope with a life of hardship.

Two northern artists are now recognised as the chroniclers of social change seen during the post war period of the 20th century. These artists are L.S. Lowry and Norman Cornish.

Lowry was from Salford in Manchester and depicted scenes of life in industrial North West England. He was widely regarded as a loner, many of his paintings depicting loneliness. He began his working career as a rent collector and was perceived as an outsider in his community looking in on his subjects.

Norman Cornish painted life in the North East of England where he focused on mining life in Spennymoor, a small town in County Durham.

Charlie Rogers also painted life in the North East of England. Each artist was inspired to paint the sights and sounds of their respective northern towns.

Having chronicled and closely observed these paintings, I have concluded Charlie Rogers was motivated by a deep affection and appreciation for Tyneside and the people who lived on both sides of the River Tyne.

His paintings and sketches captured a period of time stretching from the mid-1960s through to his death in April 2020.

Like Lowry and Cornish, Charlie Rogers realised he was in a race against time to record as much of his local landscape as possible before it was too late. Before swathes of residential and industrial buildings had been torn down and their memory lost forever, flattened by the impending bulldozers.

Charlie Rogers once said 'I feel I have spent much of my career being pursued by bulldozers'.

Before the bulldozers

The story begins

On the morning of February 4 2023, I knocked on the door of a terraced house in Gateshead in the North East of England. I had been invited to view a collection of artwork left behind by a local artist who had passed away three years earlier.

What I discovered that morning was both unexpected and quite extraordinary.

Throughout the morning I was guided around the artist's family home by his son. I was invited to peruse a selection of the artist's work. I soon realised I was witnessing something very special.

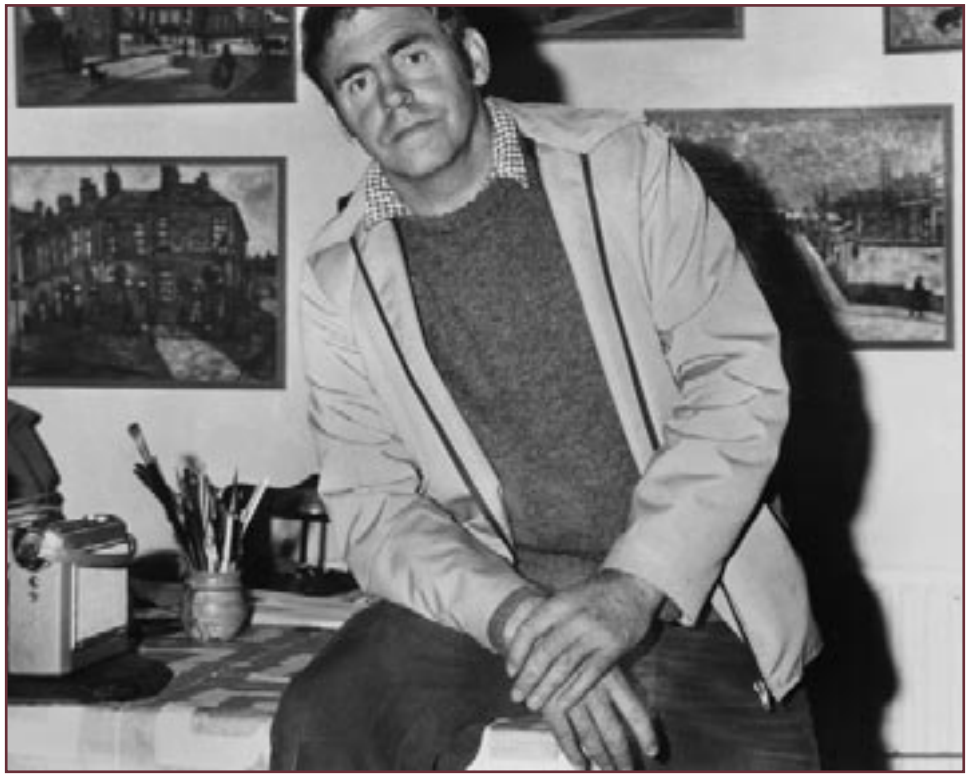
Further visits followed over the following weeks, allowing me to collate paintings and sketches amounting to a highly significant record of over 60 years of Tyneside's recent heritage.

Since that morning and following hundreds of hours of research and interviews, I believe the time has come to tell the story. The story of a previously unknown body of breathtaking work by a previously largely unrecognised artist.

After gathering the views of academics, connoisseurs and other artists, the consensus of opinion is that the body of work produced during the lifetime of Gateshead artist Charles Henry Rogers deserves to be applauded.

Following this recent discovery it is now clear the legacy of Charlie Rogers should be preserved and suitably promoted.

After turning the final page of this book and having considered the images on offer, I hope you will agree that this fine body of work deserves to stand alongside the two most recognised and celebrated northern artists, L. S. Lowry and Norman Cornish.



The World Of Charlie Rogers

Writer Michael Chaplin discovers the lost world of the artist Charlie Rogers and his haunting images of Gateshead – the hometown he loved so much.

One Monday morning long ago, a young man called Charlie Rogers limped down Bensham Road in Gateshead, wincing as he went. Two days before, this 'ageing left back' (his description) was playing in a Cup-tie for Kibblesworth Colliery Welfare when he got 'a hefty whack on an already dodgy left knee'.

Back Cotfield Street

The doctor studied it, tut-tutted grumpily, told his patient he should take a week off work and gave him a prescription for a bottle of 'Fiery Jack Liniment'.

While the young man who once had a trial for Sunderland FC and boxed for the British Army was in that part of town he called on his elderly aunt, the splendidly named Mrs Violet Gwendoline Woodhead. While sipping his tea, he gazed at the view from her front window. Something struck him about the back lane opposite.

There was nothing special about it - there were hundreds of similar lanes in Gateshead - but in a way that was just the point. This view, with its lines and angles, seemed to represent them all, and with his week off work, the young man decided to paint it.

For about 2-3 hours over five or six mornings, Charlie painted the view, trying what he described as a 'pen and wash' technique. The result was titled Back Cotfield Street.

He didn't know it then, but the life of Charles Henry Rogers had just changed. Several other local scenes followed, after which Charlie later declared, 'I had caught the bug'.

He had found his metier and purpose: to record in his art the life and landscape of his hometown, which he would pursue unerringly for the next 56 years, building up a vast collection of paintings and drawings of buildings, bridges, pubs, lanes, parks and of course the people of Gateshead going about their business.

Down the centuries, around the world, a strong sense of place — often their place — has been crucial to many artists. Think of Claude Monet and his sumptuous garden at Giverny; the Suffolk of John Constable; the little town of Cookham by the Thames, which so fired the extraordinary imagination of Stanley Spencer.

Closer to home, there's the Aspatria of Sheila Fell and the two seaside places of Seaburn and Berwick which so

Sketching in the backyard

haunted her mentor, Laurence Stephen Lowry, he visited them many times, principally to paint haunting pictures of the sea.

Finally, there's the Ashington Group, rightly celebrated in Lee Hall's brilliant play The Pitmen Painters, and their later counterpart in County Durham, Norman Cornish, whose marvellously rich and long career as an artist was built on the rock of his obsession with the people and streets of his hometown of Spennymoor in Co. Durham.

Cooker with pans

Many years ago, Charlie Rogers joined that great tradition. You may not have heard of him, but my hunch is that you will soon see and hear a lot more about the man, his life and work, and absorption with his special place: Gateshead. In a sense Charlie Rogers is coming home.

Charlie was pleased by that first attempt at picture-making. As he wryly put it: 'I found it very therapeutic, my knee being cured within the week. I tried one or two more pictures in that part of old Bensham, Finn Street and Gibson Street. Working outside whenever the weather permitted, I tried to capture the character of these odd up-and-down streets with their corner shops, cobbles and ancient green gas-lamps'.

It helped that Charlie found a series of jobs that involved working outside, as a groundsman for Durham County Council, also erecting TV aerials for Rediffusion, though his mate complained Charlie often neglected his role holding the ladder steady and wandered off to draw an image that had caught his eye.

In the mid-1960s Charlie took evening classes at Newcastle's College of Art and Design, so impressing his teacher that he recommended Charlie to the artist Harry Lord, who ran the Univision Gallery in the Bigg Market.

The fledgling artist got lucky: a painter had just dropped out of a three-artist exhibition, so Harry invited Charlie to take the spot — his first show! Others soon followed: another Newcastle gallery run by Scott Dobson (of Larn Yersel Geordie fame) took him on; he had a show at his home-town's Shipley Art Gallery; he was then invited to show at the Scottish Royal Academy in Edinburgh alongside the eminent landscape painter Sir William McTaggart.

Finally, Charlie entered work for London's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and 'amazingly found myself being hung alongside the likes of Edward Ardizzone and Ruskin Spear', the first of four appearances at one of the biggest shows in Britain's fine art calendar.

This was in 1967, just three years after Charlie had picked up a brush for the first time, to paint Back Cotfield Street from his Auntie Violet's front window.

And then what, you might ask? Well, just that it seems to me Charlie had made such a splash with his work he might have capitalised by getting on a train to King's Cross to make a future and maybe his fortune in the great metropolitan art scene of the capital.

Self-portrait of the artist as a young man

But Charlie didn't do that. I suspect it never even occurred to him to leave Tyneside. He was a Gateshead lad and knew deep down that it offered him all he would ever need as a painter – indeed as a human being.

This was doubly true after he met a librarian from Hexham called Ann at The Mayfair Ballroom in Newcastle in 1972. They married the following year - enjoying an unglamorous honeymoon in Dewsbury and Manchester, Charlie producing a visual record of the trip - and their only child Charlie Junior was born the year after.

Charlie Senior now had everything he wanted in life.

Family life: Ann and her two Charlies

After becoming a full-time artist, Charlie developed an unchanging modus operandi. Day after day, he would leave the family home in Low Fell and roam the streets of his town, closely observing houses, streets, public buildings, pubs, unfolding vistas and of course back lanes, which he once described as 'pure inspiration'.

He had a special fondness for Saltwell Park, which was on his doorstep. Some paintings included figures, many without, the artist's imagination capturing anything unusual. Rather than sketching with pencil, Charlie preferred to paint directly onto paper held in place on a board with bulldog clips.

Wherever he went Charlie carried two small palettes in his pocket and indeed he never actually owned an easel. He became a familiar figure around the town; people would stop and talk to him about their lives. The 1960s and 70s were a time of significant change in the urban landscape of Tyneside, with the collapse of old industries and the flattening rather than the regeneration of Victorian and Edwardian housing.

Charlie observed this as it happened, preferably before it happened. He later joked that it felt like he had spent much of his painting career 'being pursued by bulldozers'.

Charlie Junior in baby bath

In addition to reflecting this public world, Charlie also produced a wealth of paintings and drawings of his family life. One of his very first works

was a portrait of his sleeping father, who he always called Pop.

After Charlie Junior was born, the painter lovingly recorded his passage through boyhood and beyond. Not content with that, he produced hundreds of paintings of furniture and fittings in the home.

One of the pleasing surprises of researching Charlie's life and work was discovering his friendship with another brilliant painter of people and place, Norman Cornish of Spennymoor.

Here I should declare an interest: Norman and my writer father Sid were lifelong pals, who together worked underground at Dean & Chapter Colliery in Ferryhill, also attending the Spennymoor Settlement (the so-called 'pitmen's university') to further their artistic ambitions. Marrers in art and marrers in the pit, you might say.

Norman and Charlie had even more in common and an enduring friendship developed. In the 1970s and beyond they would meet regularly on sketching trips around each other's territory, drawing street scenes and drinkers in pubs.

Norman produced his version of Charlie's very first painting, that view of Cotfield Street from Auntie Violet's house; Charlie painted Norman drawing in Spennymoor; Norman sketched Charlie looking at a painting by L.S. Lowry at the Stone Gallery in Newcastle and together they produced a brilliant drawing of drinkers' faces in a mirror at the Hillingdon pub in Spennymoor. Marrers in art and marrers in the pub, you might say.

Looking at Lowry by Norman Cornish

Norman Cornish passed away in 2014, painting to the end, and it was my great privilege to give an oration at his funeral. I think Charlie would have been there, but to my loss we never met.

The following year his beloved Ann died and Charlie dedicated his very last exhibition, at the Low Fell Library in 2016-17, to her memory. In 2019 he was taken into care but continued to paint into his final days.

The last of around 1,000 paintings and drawings was of the view from his care home window of roofs overlooking St Vincent Street, near Sunderland Road - in Gateshead of course.

The painting was half-completed when Charlie died at the end of an immensely productive half-century recording his place and its people, all of which, he wryly noted, 'I owe to that dirty little ginger half-back who temporarily crippled me long, long ago'.

Charlie Rogers is buried, together with Ann, at — where else? — Saltwell Cemetery in Gateshead, his remarkable story ended.

Then again, maybe not.

Enter the Gateshead artist Brian Rankin. Last year as he prepared to open a new gallery, Brian discovered the immense artistic and indeed physical legacy left behind by Charlie and set out on a mission to celebrate and promote it.

In this he has been helped greatly by the family of Charlie's good friend Norman Cornish, who have been down this road themselves in the last 10 years. Brian has curated a brilliant exhibition of Charlie's work at his Come View My Art Gallery in Sheriffs Highway, Low Fell and been much cheered by the delighted response of people to the story.

'So many of the visitors here have loved the work and thanked me for giving them the chance to bring younger family members to see their town in the not-too-distant past.'

Brian is also discussing with Gateshead Council the opening of a Charlie Rogers trail around his beloved Saltwell Park and a permanent exhibition in Saltwell Towers, the delightful former home of stained-glass manufacturer William Wailes.

As for the town's Shipley Gallery, it must surely mount a retrospective of Gateshead's own. I think they would find people queuing around the block to see it, with this art lover at the front.

Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man

Many years ago, Charlie Rogers felt compelled to defend his friend in print from the jibes of 'intellectual' critics who sneered at his work depicting the lives of the common people:

'Norman Cornish has stuck down for us that something characteristic of the North East, not only what it looks like, but what it also feels like. For me, it's taken one hell of a good artist to do that - and this man has done that and this man is one hell of a good artist! Which is why people are drawn back again and again - and always will be drawn back - to his paintings.'

Knowing him as I did, I'm sure Norman Stansfield Cornish would have said just the same of Charles Henry Rogers.

Early sketch on page of The Journal with quote: 'When I get nervous, the gun comes out.'

My Mate Charlie Rogers

50 years of one man's view of my home town

Dennis Donnelly 11 December 2023

Dennis Donnelly, known locally as 'the insurance man from Birtley', became a lifelong friend and supporter of Charlie Rogers. He purchased a large number of Charlie's paintings for himself and sold many on his behalf. Charlie benefited greatly from Dennis's business acumen to further his career as a professional artist. Dennis is widely appreciated for his charity work.

Note to Brian Rankin.

These are my reminiscences of Charlie Rogers. The stories were typed by my daughter as I recalled them verbally.

How we met

In 1988, I heard that St Cuthbert's Church on Bensham Bank was to be knocked down. As a former choir boy and lance corporal of the Junior Training Corps of the Church Lads Brigade, that hit hard.

I had heard this from Bob Pickersgill, a contact through my work as an insurance broker. When he heard my thoughts on the matter, he told me that there were some paintings for sale at the Reference Library at Caedmon Hall and thought there may be one of the Church.

So, I headed to Caedmon Hall where I bought two paintings, although sadly there were none of St Cuthbert's. Determined to find the view I wanted, I appealed to the library staff who told me where I could contact the artist, Charlie Rogers.

I knocked on Charlie's front door one lunchtime. Introducing myself, I explained about St Cuthbert's Church and why I had come to see him. He told me he didn't do commissions (telling me that he decided what to paint) but said he had some that I might like to buy. He invited me to come back that evening and he would show me the collection.

That evening I knocked once more. 'Hello,' he said 'I know you, don't I?'

'Yes, I was here at lunch time.'

'Nah, from Saltwell Park – cock and hen★. So we've played football together before.' Small world!

He invited me in, showed me around then took me to the spare room where he kept his work. There I saw about 200 paintings. In the middle of the room, two bricks lay on sheets of hardboard, between them his precious paintings were being kept flat.

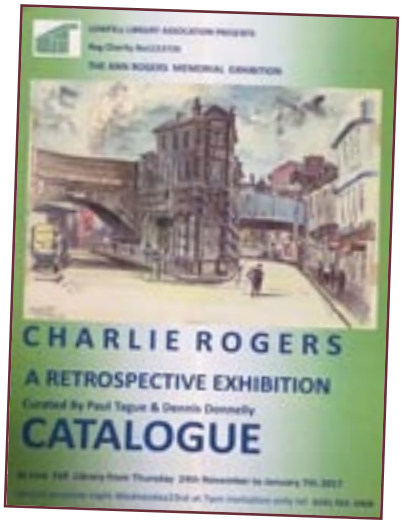
I bought three oils for £200 and brought them home. As a lad from Third Street, I was like a dog with two tails because they were of Bensham and one had the church on!

Choosing locations

Charlie's choice of location ranged from Gateshead and Newcastle to the Costa Brava. He set off with a rucksack on his back and hitchhiked to Spain.

During the 1970s Charlie visited Paris and joined his peers Miriam Dansky, Tom Pickard and Allen Ginsberg to capture the Parisian vistas. They stayed in lodgings with Jack Kerouac.

Charlie regaled tales of how he went to the bus station and chose the place he liked the look of and got the bus there, sketched, then returned to Paris. And that's how he chose the views he painted in France.



Galleries, road trips and exhibitions

On various occasions, after we'd discussed the football, Charlie and I would discuss art. Whenever there was an interesting exhibition I would chauffeur him to the gallery. We visited Rothbury, Spennymoor, Bishop Auckland and Ferryhill. Norman Cornish was a contemporary of Charlie. They both exhibited in the Shipley Art Gallery and other venues. Charlie's local paintings always sold out before other artists at Christmas exhibitions.

On one occasion, I exhibited 40 from my collection at the Shipley Art Gallery. I hear it was well attended, although I was never invited to the launch.

When Bensham Settlement was seeking funds to redecorate the hall, they received grant funding for an exhibition of paintings from a living artist who was still working. I loaned them 40 paintings from my growing collection. After the exhibition, I offered to leave them in situ so the people of Gateshead could enjoy them, however this was declined to avoid damage to the wallpaper.

In 2016 I exhibited some of my collection at Low Fell Library in memory of Ann Rogers, Charlie's wife. Charlie attended and said of the display, in his usual self-deprecating manner, 'shows promise'.

Fundraising

In order to raise funds for North East charities, Charlie sold me a number of watercolours and I auctioned them at charity events. Always popular at Gateshead Grammar School Reunions, where my old mates would bid against each other to get their hands on the images of their old streets.

Around the world

So how far around the world has Charlie's art gone? Well, the Gateshead lads who emigrated all have them in their front rooms, from Hong Kong to Auckland and Wellington, round past Durban and Cape Town, across the Atlantic to Connecticut and Toronto.

London

Charlie told me how he would hitchhike to London to visit the art galleries. When he could afford it, he would get the train costing £1.50. Staying for one night in a Kings Cross bed and breakfast would cost him £3.50. He would later exhibit at the Royal Academy, and on one occasion he was introduced to Princess Margaret.

Near the end

Towards the end of 2019, I called in to see Charlie and was surprised to see how poorly he looked. He'd had a fall whilst visiting Ann's grave in Saltwell Cemetery. Despite this, he wanted me to take him to Tesco in Gateshead where he went in for his usual 'double egg and chips'. When I dropped him off at home afterwards, that was our final goodbye. Not long after, he moved into sheltered accommodation.

My collection

My collection spans from 1968 to 2018. There was the occasional painting that Charlie would not sell me, explaining 'Mrs Rogers likes that one'.

I've bought around 100 for my own pleasure and around the same number on behalf of others.

50 years of one man's view of my home town.

⋆ Cock and Hen – a device similar to flipping a coin for choosing late comers to an amateur football match in Saltwell Park. 'The ball's mine so I've got first choice – I choose Hen.'

The Beginning

The Beginning

Early Years

Charles Henry Rogers was born to Francis and Grace Rogers on 16 January 1930. The family lived at 239, Westbourne Avenue in Gateshead. The house had no inside bathroom and the toilet was located next to the coal store in the back yard. Charlie was the younger of two brothers. His older brother was named Frank.

Early Signs of Talent

Charlie Rogers attended Kelvin Grove Elementary School in Gateshead. Here a teacher encouraged him to take art seriously and to try for art college but it was wartime. Charlie later said 'nobody really got a great deal of schooling then'.

The school advised Charlie's parents he had a talent for art and recommended art school. Reluctantly they refused due to lack of money.

The War Years

When the Second World War broke out in 1939 Charlie and Frank were evacuated to a home in Woodlands Road, Bishop Auckland, County Durham for five years.

Charlie (right) with brother Frank

Early Employment

During the early part of his working life Charlie Rogers was a clerk before completing his national service in the RAF. He then returned to clerical work, taking up a variety of occupations on Tyneside and briefly in the south of England before settling permanently in Gateshead.

Charlie had a variety of jobs including a 'flirtation with the pits at the nearby mining village of Kibblesworth'.

However, he soon realised he had developed an addiction to fresh air and he settled for an above-ground job with British Ropes. Charlie also worked for the Post Office and for Barkers Electricians, located on Gateshead's West Street.

Barkers Electricians
image by kind permission of Gateshead Libraries

Men at Work 19.2.92

Gateshead High Street 22.3.97

Sand and Wagon 30.7.97

The Butlins holiday camp football team of 1959 which included Sean Connery and Des O'Connor. Charlie is kneeling to the left.

Butlins Holiday Camp

Charlie was a red coat at Butlins holiday camps for a number of years. Camps he worked at included Filey and Clacton-on-Sea.

Charlie Rogers Whitley Bay

The Rediffusion Story

George Lewis

'When my father George Lewis was employed at Rediffusion TV company, there were numerous jobs including external, internal installation and inspection work. He enjoyed working outside especially during the summer months, covering local north east areas.

Charlie Rogers worked there at the same time and eventually they started working together.

At the start of the day, they would collect work cards at the office for the places they would be working that day then away off in the van to make a start.

Unfortunately for my father, Charlie's passion for art was always his first love and his main focus. While my father was up the ladder installing cables etc. Charlie would be at the base of the ladder with his sketch pad out. Quite often my father would shout down for Charlie to pass up a certain tool whilst up the ladder. Charlie would usually reply 'hang on George, I'll just get this down' (his sketch for his next painting).

This made it a longer working day for my father but at least he can say he played his small part in letting Charlie pursue his passion for art and be able to accumulate the amount of work he produced which we all get the benefit of today'.

Lampmender, Grey Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1997

The Groundsman's Job

From his early thirties to his early forties Charlie was employed by Durham County Council, helping to maintain local school playing fields. His artistic talent was recognised by school teachers, who asked Charlie to lecture on art to their pupils.

The Poster at Gateshead Technical College

'He was born in Gateshead in 1930 and began painting in 1960 when he realised he wasn't going to make it as a footballer.'

Evening Chronicle 3.10.90

During the early 1960s, while continuing to work for Durham County Council as a groundsman, Charlie saw a poster advertising art classes at Gateshead Technical College under Wilfred Taylor.

Charlie said, 'I saw a poster to go to a drawing class in Gateshead. For some reason what I wanted to do was to draw but when I got there all the man used to come up and say was "Are you going to start painting?" After a few weeks of that he'd say "Next week you'll have to start painting" and I'd say "No, I want to draw". You see all I was drawing was what was in the room - the woman standing at the easel copying her picture post card. Eventually the teacher gave me an introduction to the Gateshead Arts Society which met at the Shipley Art Gallery - so I went along and started to draw the models."'

Football

Charlie Rogers had two passions in life; art and football. From an early age his wish was to become a professional footballer. He played football regularly until well into his sixties. Charlie supported both Newcastle United and his home town team Gateshead United. In 1950 he was invited to play in a football trial at nearby Chester-Le-Street by Sunderland Associated Football Club. He was unsuccessful.

'He applied to do pre-season training at Southampton Football Club which had advertised for new players.'

Dennis Donnelly

'I wanted to be a famous inside left but that just didn't happen.' Charlie Rogers

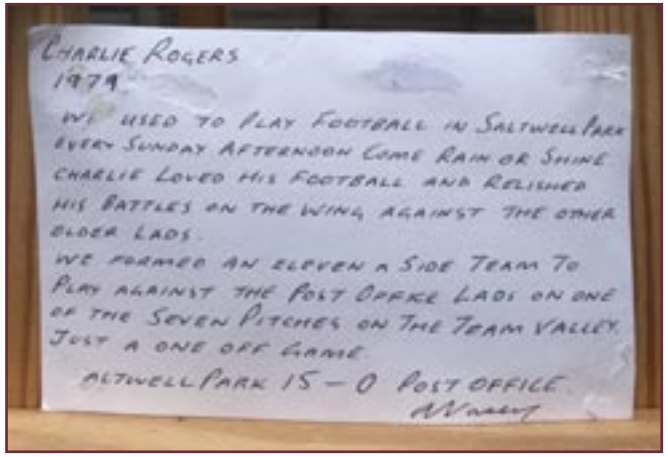
Spectators, Chester Moor 11.10.08

Saltwell Park Football Team 1979

The Sunday afternoon football match

Friend and fellow local artist Dave Cockburn recalls the twenty-plus a side football matches which took place every Sunday afternoon at Saltwell Park. Local men of all ages and ability were welcome to join in. However, on one particular Sunday afternoon, Dave says 'the Gascoignes turned up from Dunston and asked for a game. A young Paul Gascogne was not best pleased when his request was denied. He decided not to return the ball and took it home.'

Note from Alan Vasey


CHARLIE ROGERS
1979
WE USED TO PLAY FOOTBALL IN SALTWELL PARK
EVERY SUNDAY AFTERNOON COME RAIN OR SHINE
CHARLIE LOVED HIS FOOTBALL AND RELISHED
HIS BATTLES ON THE WING AGAINST THE OTHER
OLDER LADS.
WE FORMED AN ELEVEN A SIDE TEAM TO
PLAY AGAINST THE POST OFFICE LADS ON ONE
OF THE SEVEN PITCHES ON THE TEAM VALLEY.
JUST A ONE OFF GAME
ALTWELL PARK 15 – 0 POST OFFICE

Across tennis courts up to Westbourne Avenue

Football at Dunston 27/8/2009

Norman Lees

Charlie was a good friend of professional footballer Norman Lees who also lived on Westbourne Avenue. Charlie gave the watercolour painting above to Norman and his new wife on their wedding day.

At the Match, Filtrona Park South Shields 2008

Gateshead v Consett FA Cup. 27. 10. 96

KEEGAN QUITS

On the 8th January 1997 Charlie Rogers and other Tyneside football fans were left bewildered by the news that Kevin Keegan had announced his resignation as manager of Newcastle United Football Club. Charlie captured this moment in his painting titled Monument, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Keegan Quits) 8.1.97

Football Goal Posts

A frequent sight around the streets and back lanes of Tyneside were images of football goalposts painted in white on gable end walls.

The 'football goals'

The First Paintings

The First Paintings

During an interview Charlie Rogers was asked. 'Can you tell me something about how you began painting and what sparked you off?'

Charlie replied. 'The first things I did didn't have any figures in at all. When I came to looking at things on my own, I began to realise after I had looked around Bensham a little bit further that there were quite a few things which I hadn't seen (in pictures) from anybody else apart from one man - Marshall F Atkinson. That picture was in an open-air summer exhibition in Saltwell Park, around the mid-1950s. There was a woman hanging the washing out and St. Chad's Church in the background. For some reason the picture struck me - and that was about ten years before I ever tried to paint.'

One of the earliest known pictures by Charlie Rogers is this seated lady, dated 1962. Following this was a painting titled 'Gateshead Art Society First Drawing '63'. In the same year Charlie produced a pastel sketch titled 'My Father Asleep'.

Seated lady '62

Gateshead Art Society First Drawing '63

My Father Asleep '63

Pop Drinking

The Letter

Charlie was a talented amateur footballer during his youth and had ambitions of turning professional. Although this wasn't to be, he continued to play for local teams into his mid-thirties.

In 1964, aged 34, he suffered a 'hefty whack across the left knee' during a local cup tie while playing for Kibblesworth Colliery Welfare.

More than 40 years later Charlie wrote a letter in which he revealed how this seemingly innocuous injury led him on a 55-year journey to record the local heritage of Tyneside.

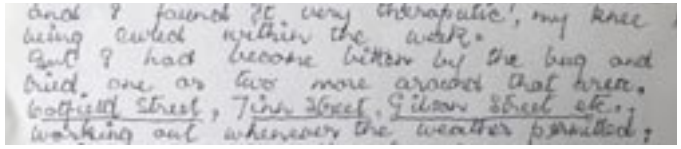
His GP gave him time off work, instructions to rest his knee, and a prescription for Fiery Jack Ointment to relieve the pain. This enforced idleness left Charlie with time on his hands and he decided to paint the view opposite his aunt Gwendoline's front window. It was one of his first significant attempts at any kind of drawing or painting.

Over the next few days Charlie spent several hours each morning painting the view, using what he described as a 'pen and wash' technique. The result was Back Cotfield Street.

Auntie Gwen's 262 Bensham Road Gateshead 1979

Several other local street scenes followed, after which Charlie declared: 'I had caught the bug'.

The letter concludes with '….and all this I owe to that anonymous dirty little half-back who temporarily crippled me 42 years ago'.



Extract from the handwritten letter

Back Cotfield Street 1964

Tait's Fish and Chip Shop, Bensham Road

The Lucky Break

Cotfield Street was demolished soon after Charlie Rogers captured it, like so many streets that were typical of his work.

His first work, he said, surprised him, so he carried on and went to night classes. His teacher knew the owner of the Univision Gallery in Newcastle, Harry Lord, and through that connection he had his first show. A painter had pulled out of a three-man exhibition planned at the gallery and Charlie Rogers was lucky enough to get his place.

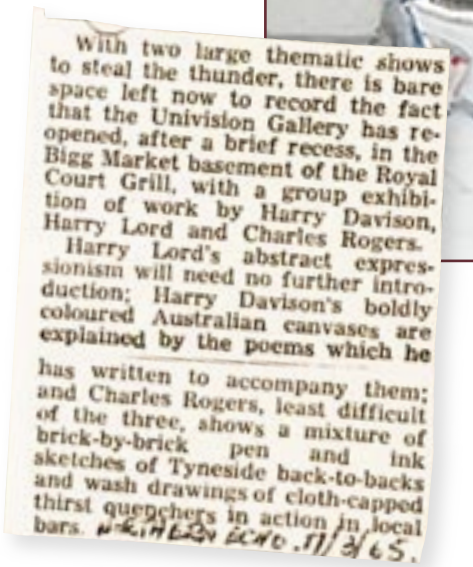
Charlie explained: 'There was going to be a three-man show in March 1965 but the third man dropped out and Harry said to me: 'Would you fill this up with some of your little drawings?' He just mounted them on pieces of cardboard, stuck them up, and that was my first exhibition."

Norman Cornish attended this exhibition. The two likeminded artists began a lifelong friendship which would culminate in exhibiting together at the Christmas exhibition at the Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery in 1990

Shows at the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead and the Westgate Gallery in Newcastle soon followed.

In 1967, Charlie tried for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in London and a picture was accepted. This was another painting of Cotfield Street, finished shortly before it was pulled down.

Charlie also won the approval of the Royal Society of British Artists and the Scottish Academy.



With two large thematic shows to steal the thunder, there is bare space left now to record the fact that the Univision Gallery has re-opened, after a brief recess, in the Bigg Market basement of the Royal Court Grill, with a group exhibition of work by Harry Davison, Harry Lord and Charles Rogers.

Harry Lord's abstract expressionism will need no further introduction; Harry Davison's boldly coloured Australian canvases are explained by the poems which he has written to accompany them; and Charles Rogers, least difficult of the three, shows a mixture of brick-by-brick pen and ink sketches of Tyneside back-to-backs and wash drawings of cloth-capped thirst quenchers in action in local bars.

Northern Echo article 17/3/65

Bigg Market, Newcastle-upon Tyne Evening scene

'Everything I've done I achieved in the first three years when I still didn't really know what I was doing.'

Charlie Rogers

Charlie's Gateshead

Notable Gateshead Locations

Map provided by kind permission of Gateshead Libraries

1 Saltwell Park

2 239 Westbourne Avenue

3 Coatsworth Road

4 Shipley Art Gallery

5 Cenotaph

6 St Cuthbert's Church

7 Cotfield Street

8 The Railway Quarter

Although the vast majority of Charlie's work was Gateshead based he also found time to cross the river and paint in a number of locations in Newcastle, most notably on the Quayside (left) and Bigg Market (right).

CHRIST JESUS
TO SAVE
SINNERS
BINGO
CASTLE

Charlie's Gateshead

Charlie Rogers was born at 239, Westbourne Avenue in Gateshead, a few minutes' walk from Saltwell Park. This became the family home following Charlie's marriage to Ann in 1973. The family moved to neighbouring Windsor Avenue in 1985. Streets in the 'Avenues' were made up of Tyneside flats, pairs of single-storey dwellings within a two-storey terrace. In Charlie's time many Tyneside flats did not have a bathroom or inside toilet. The 'netty' was located next to the coal house at the end of the back yard.

'Many of the social and industrial scenes he captured over a period of more than sixty years no longer exist. His delicate oil paintings, watercolours and sketches are a reminder of Tyneside and not that long ago.'

From an article in the Newcastle Journal dated 1973

Bensham Road

Derek Kirkup was the owner of the Percy Gallery located in the Handyside Arcade in Newcastle. He supported Charlie with an exhibition here in 1973.
This busy road which runs from the centre of Gateshead down to the Team Valley area, was the subject of many Charlie Rogers paintings and sketches throughout his sixty-year career as an artist. The road contained an eclectic mix of retailers which provided a constant source of subject matter. It was a scene looking across this road that inspired Charlie Rogers to create his first painting following a football injury.

'The subjects of his paintings are the things and places you never notice until they are gone.'

Derek Kirkup, Percy Gallery

Here we can see paintings featuring Bensham Road together with photographs by Trevor Ermel.

Bensham Road included the home of his Aunt Violet, pubs he regularly frequented with other local artists and St Cuthbert's Church. The vast majority of these buildings are long gone due to the demolition of swathes of housing during the 1960s and 1970s.

'These pictures have a considerable historical value, accurately detailing the people, the signs, the shopfronts, the things that change gradually and unnoticed before disappearing altogether.'

David Whetstone – Newcastle Journal 1988

Gateshead Art Society, Charlie Rogers is standing third from the right. With kind permission of Gateshead Art Society

Gateshead Art Society

Charlie joined the group in 1963 and exhibited for the first time in 1964. The group was established in 1947 and is based at the Shipley Art Gallery.

'The Shipley' as it is known locally, is located on Prince Consort Road, within a short distance of the Rogers family home. Charlie would visit the gallery weekly to attend the Gateshead Art Society art classes.

In 1995 Charlie was awarded an honorary life membership.

The Mittens Story

Lynn Hazel Turner

'I first met Charlie Rogers when I was about eight years of age. He used to be friends with the poet Tom Pickard and his wife Connie who lived on Avenue Road, near Saltwell Park. Their daughter Catherine and I were best friends and together we would visit his home to be sketched where his wife would make us juice and biscuits.

We were sometimes asked to be models for the Gateshead Art Society who held weekly art classes at the Shipley Art Gallery.

We had the best memories at that age. We looked forward to being sketched as we got paid by every artist and sometimes there were quite a few, it seemed like a small fortune to us.

My mam used to collect me after going to the art gallery and she got to meet Charlie and see his art. I think she was secretly pleased that the artists used to pay me for sitting as my parents weren't rich and I remember saving my money up.

Charlie always introduced us to the other artists and seemed to be the one in charge of the classes. He used to laugh when I insisted on keeping my hat and mittens on in colder weather as I had been instructed by my mam to never take any clothes off!

This sketch is of me and Catherine Pickard. I remember that hat!'

Two girls, 1978

‘Only Paint What You Know’

by Dave Cockburn

Gateshead artist Dave Cockburn was a friend and contemporary of Charlie Rogers. Both artists were members of the Gateshead Art Society. They first met in 2003 after Dave noticed Charlie painting near the bandstand in the Grove area of Saltwell Park.

Each year members of the Gateshead Art Society are invited to submit work for inclusion in the Society’s annual exhibition. One year Dave entered three animal portraits, his favourite of which featured a jaguar. He was devastated when not one of his paintings were accepted by the judging panel. Charlie noticed Dave was upset and took him aside for a chat.

‘Have you ever seen a jaguar in real life?’ he asked his friend. ‘No’ replied Dave. ‘Let me give you some advice,’ offered Charlie. ‘Only paint what you know.’

The following year Dave submitted three local scenes which were all accepted. ‘I never forgot that advice,’ he said.

Listening to the Band Saltwell Park 2003

Charlie Rogers was inspired on many occasions to paint and sketch this characterful little street with Tait’s fish and chip shop on one corner. It also caught the eye of Norman Cornish who travelled from his home in Spennymoor to capture the scene.

Image - Street in Gateshead by Norman Cornish

Image - Cotfield Street, Gateshead-on-Tyne by Charlie Rogers

Lady Vernon School Yard

One of the largest known oil paintings by Charlie Rogers, this piece from 1968, is titled 'Lady Vernon School Yard, Gateshead', oil on paper.

The painting was acquired in poor condition by Charlie's friend and supporter Dennis Donnelly at a Newcastle saleroom in 1992. 'It was like a potato skin shape when I got it,' said Dennis. 'It had been left in a damp location behind a door.'

He took the painting to the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle to see if it could be flattened and restored. Several months later the painting was back to its former glory. When asked how much he wanted for the repair, the conservator replied: 'My daughter is doing the Great North Run. Just give me £10 towards sponsoring her.'

Lady Vernon School Yard, Gateshead

St Cuthbert's Church

Charlie Rogers was particularly inspired by St Cuthbert's Church and the terraced streets that, prior to the bulldozers, surrounded it. The church, located on Bensham Road, was built by John Dobson in 1848. This was another fine piece of local architecture which inspired Charlie Rogers to create many paintings over his lifetime.

St Cuthbert's Church

St Cuthbert's Church

Bensham Court

Bensham Court is a block of flats located on Bensham Road. Charlie Rogers painted this watercolour scene titled 'St Cuthbert's Bensham' while looking from the window of his fellow artist and friend Marshall Atkinson's house.

Image – Newspaper Article quoting Charlie Rogers on painting St Cuthbert's Church

Image - Bensham Court

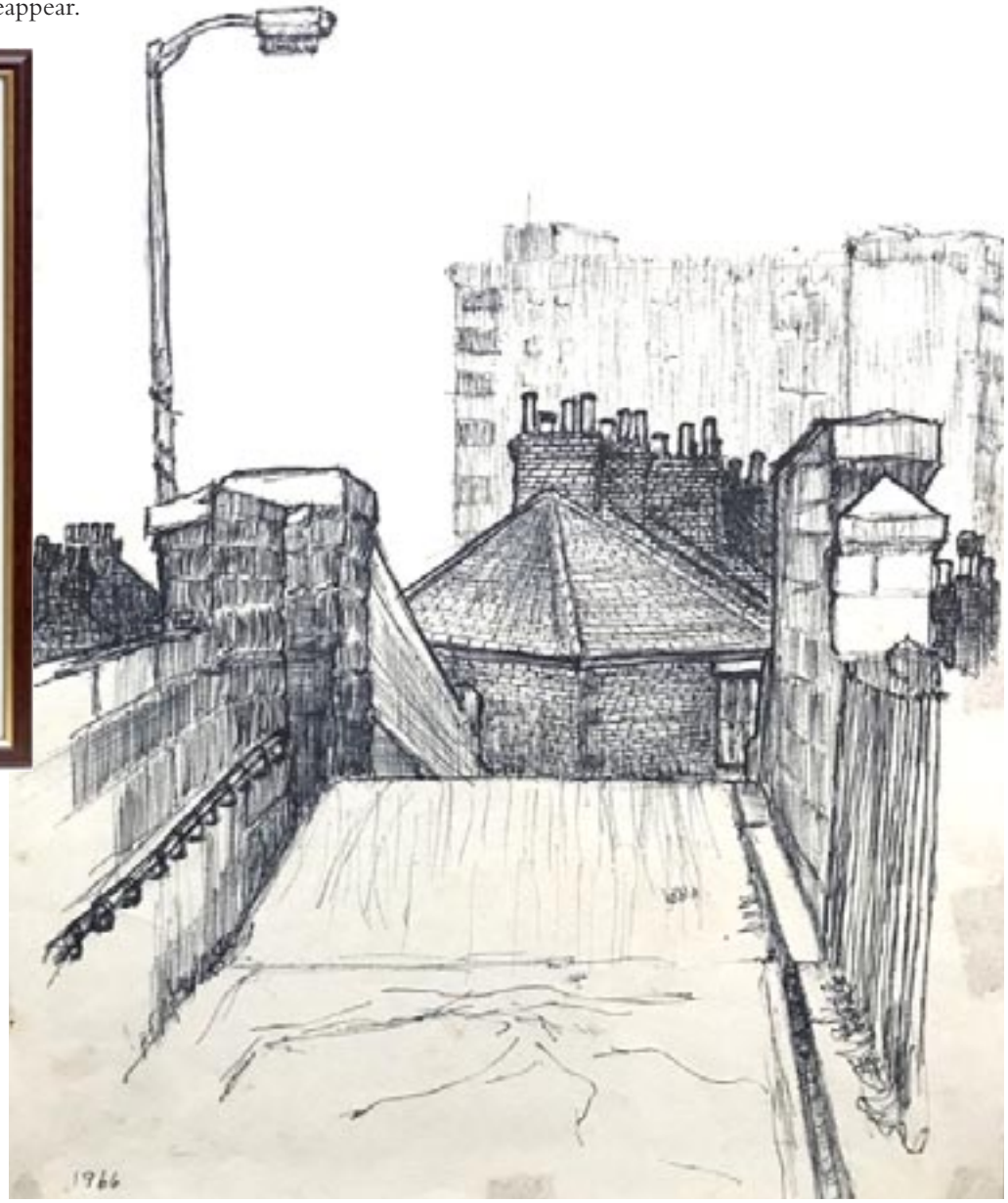
Over the years he has completed several views of St Cuthbert's, looking at it from different angles.

"It's one of my favourites. I must have done half-a-dozen at least," he added.

Dead Man's Arch

Gateshead folk continue to remind youngsters about the gruesome story of Dead Man's Arch. A train driver, blamed for a fatal railway accident near Bensham railway station, is alleged to have committed suicide by hanging himself at the scene. Local children are warned never to walk through the archway on New Year's Day when the spectre of the drivers' hanging corpse is said to reappear.

Photograph by Trevor Ermel



Coatsworth Road

Coatsworth Road is one of Gateshead's busiest shopping streets and a short walk from the Rogers' family home. It became the backdrop for numerous paintings and sketches of everyday life on Tyneside, giving Charlie the opportunity to feature figures in his work.

The Charlie Rogers sketchbooks include hundreds of single-figure sketches, providing valuable inspiration and a rich source of reference for future paintings.

THE JOURNAL
LITTLE PET
G.H. Rogers.

The Cenotaph, Gateshead 1983

Gateshead Cenotaph

The Gateshead Cenotaph was unveiled in May 1922. The war memorial is located close to the Shipley Art Gallery at the junction of Prince Consort Road and Durham Road.

The Cenotaph is of classic design and raised on a rectangular platform with three stone steps above the ground. Above the base of the Cenotaph, on the principal front and flanked by three-quarters projecting Grecian Ionic Pilasters, is a bronze panel in low relief with a bronze figure. Close to Charlie Rogers' home, the Cenotaph is another example of the artist using his immediate surroundings as subject matter.

Cenotaph at Shipcote, Gateshead-on-Tyne April 2018

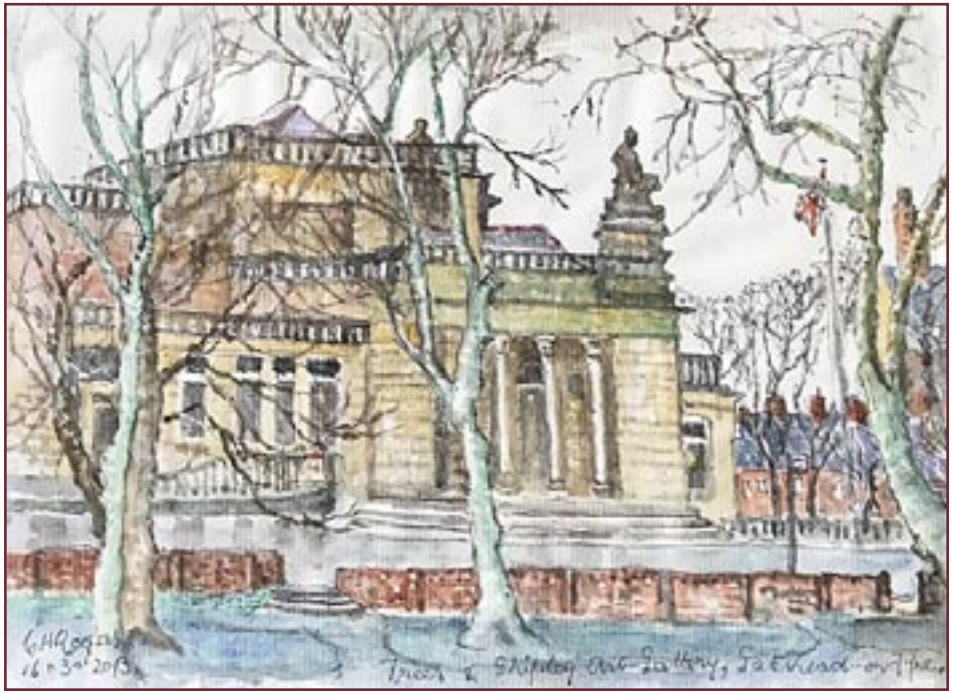
At the Cenotaph, Gateshead 2010 Rememberance Sunday

The Cenotaph and St Marks Shipcote 2016

Shipley Art Gallery

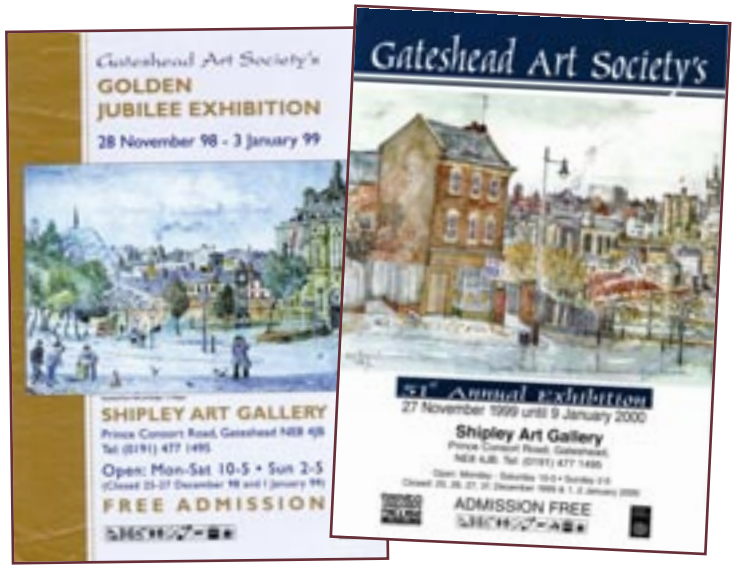
Charlie's work was shown regularly in the annual art group exhibitions at the Shipley, beginning with his first exhibition in September 1965.

Shipley Art Gallery Gateshead-on-Tyne September 2015



Trees and Shipley Art Gallery. Gateshead-on -Tyne 16.3.2013

Shipley Art Gallery. December 17.12.2011



Gateshead Art Society's Golden Jubilee Exhibition Catalogue
28 November 1998 – 3 January 1999 &
51st Annual Exhibition Catalogue 27 November 1999 – 9 January 2000

Saltwell Park

Saltwell Park is a delightful Victorian park with a rich history. It was designed by English landscape architect Edward Kemp, a leading designer of parks and gardens during the mid-Victorian era. The park incorporates the mansion and grounds of former Saltwellgate estate owner and renowned stained glass manufacturer William Wailes.

The park opened in 1876 and would become a haven of peace and tranquillity. It quickly became known as 'The People's Park'.

Saltwell Park is listed as one of 55 Green Heritage sites in the UK and has received numerous accolades. It hosts many sporting and charity events throughout the year. More information can be found on The Friends of Saltwell Park website at www.friendsofsaltwellpark.co.uk

Charlie Rogers lived his whole life within a short distance of Saltwell Park.

Saltwell Towers, Gateshead-on-Tyne 2017

Saltwell Park Bandstand

On Sunday evenings during the summer months, Charlie and his family regularly attended brass band performances in the Grove area of the park. Various bands would play from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm. In 1921, the bandstand was relocated to the Grove from its original location on the island in the boating lake. It was dismantled in 1976 and moved to Beamish Museum, where it remains alongside Ravensworth Terrace, a street once located in Gateshead. The present bandstand came from Bishop Auckland and is on permanent loan from Beamish Museum.

Watching the bands

The Jewish Community

Charlie was fascinated by Gateshead's Orthodox Jewish community, an integral part of local life for many generations. He was drawn to anything different, be it buildings or people. The park is an important venue for socialising and wellbeing. For Charlie this was a fascinating opportunity, as is reflected in his collection of paintings and sketches.

The Little Theatre

This watercolour painting by Charlie Rogers is of the Little Theatre, located near Saltwell Park. Commissioned by Dave Duffy, it was to be a 60th birthday present for his actress wife Maureen. She had recently performed in an amateur production at the theatre; the two-person play was called 'Same Time Next Year'.

Dave arranged for Charlie to include the name of the play on the theatre's exterior display board and he presented the painting to his wife at the theatre in front of her family and friends. This painting has never been on public view.

Charlie usually refused when asked to undertake a commission, but on this occasion he agreed. His wife Ann and Maureen had become friends while working together at Gateshead Central Library.

'I don't do commissions,
I only paint what I like.'
Charlie Rogers

Law's Herbal Supplies

The Saturday morning treat for many Gateshead children was a glass of Sarsaparilla at Law's Herbal Supplies on Gateshead High Street. This was usually followed by a visit to the 'pictures' (cinema).

Charlie Rogers and Dennis Donnelly would visit the store regularly, joining in conversations with owner Bill Law and other locals, usually putting the world to rights. Dennis has said they would then head to Tesco's for their favourite meal of egg and chips.

Charlie painted numerous versions of this well-known store.

The Saturday Morning Treat

Photograph by Trevor Ermel

Gateshead High Street

Rectory Road

A race against time

This is a very powerful example of Charlie's passion and determination to preserve, through his art, buildings that would soon be lost to the bulldozer. Charlie Rogers knew he was in a race against time.

It is highly likely he recognised his paintings would eventually be regarded as an important reminder to future generations of a highly significant period of social, economic and industrial change on Tyneside. Having travelled extensively throughout England, he had witnessed the impact redevelopment was having on the people and landscape of other towns throughout the northern region.

Large areas of his beloved Gateshead and Newcastle were being demolished to make way for new housing developments. This was his reasoning and his motivation to produce paintings and sketches speedily and regularly, before it was too late and the buildings were gone.

Photograph by Trevor Ermel

The Rectory Road scenes

This archway was the subject of some of Charlie's finest oil and watercolour paintings. This particular scene is an excellent example of his passion to preserve the heritage of Tyneside through his art.

The accompanying photographs by local photographer Trevor Ermel confirm the reasoning behind Charlie's decision to paint this same scene regularly.

The unique shaping of the archway would be of interest to an urban artist. However it was also evident in the first photograph; this row of terraced houses was about to be demolished.

Charlie was also inspired to produce a scene looking down from the back lane. His final version of the scene shows the one remaining house awaiting demolition.

Photograph by Trevor Ermel

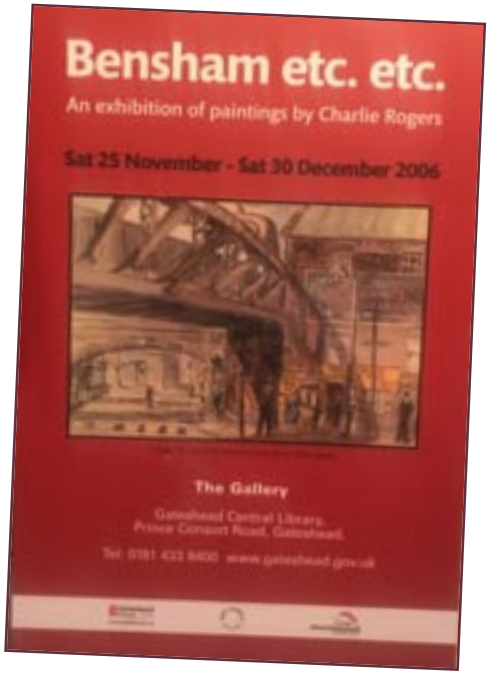
Four Doors at School Street

Photograph by Keith Pattison

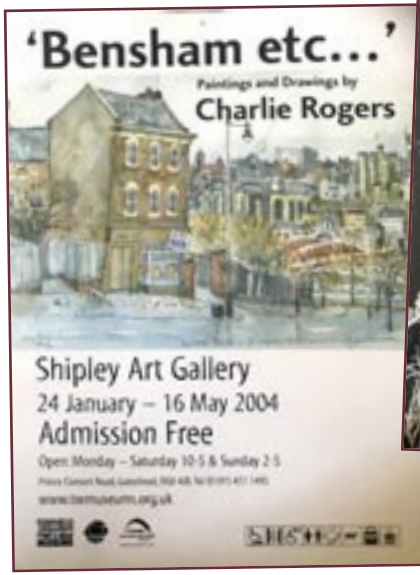
Bensham Grove

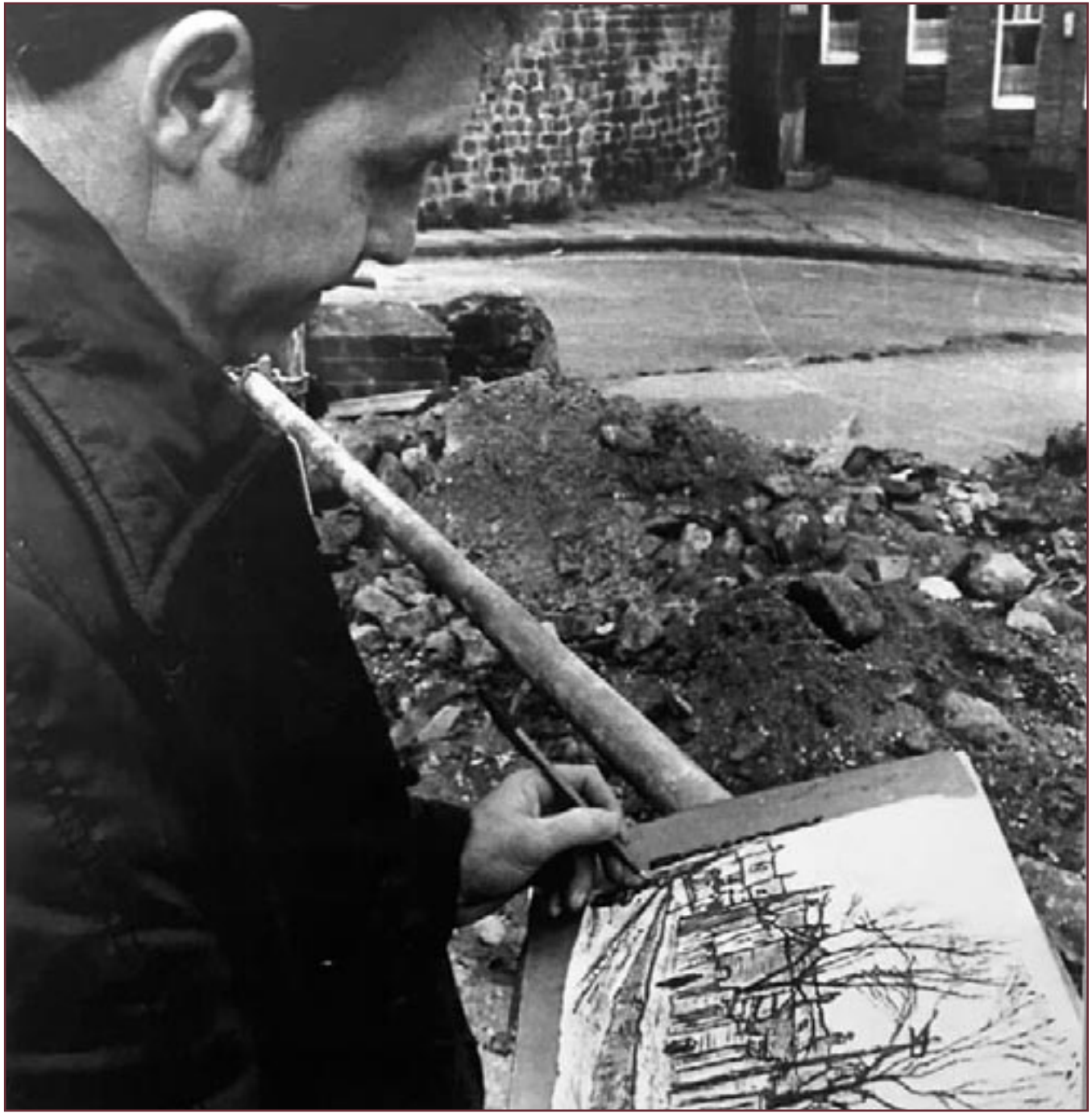
Bensham Settlement, Gateshead-on-Tyne 2014

Bensham Grove Community Centre
Sidney Grove. Gateshead. NE8 2XD
Main House
From the 6th September 2010.
A selection of the
The Paintings of Charlie Rogers
View and charity sales
Ongoing exhibition Contact the Centre for times 0191 4336450
Gateshead



Exhibition Posters





Demolition Scenes

'His partiality to back lanes and unmodernised parts meant that he was often one step ahead of the demolition teams.'

From an article in the Newcastle Evening Chronicle

During the 1960s and 1970s the residents of Tyneside witnessed the demolition of vast swathes of substandard housing.

Charlie Rogers was inspired to record these scenes in his paintings before the arrival of the demolition teams.

Railway Quarter

The Railway Quarter is situated close to both the High Level and Tyne Bridge. It once boasted two railway stations - Gateshead East and Gateshead West. The area provided a wealth of painting opportunities including some of the region's most iconic public houses, and the universally popular Joke Shop.

Charlie could always paint here, even in poor weather conditions, as shelter was provided by a large railway arch, which features in many of his paintings.

Scenes of the Railway Quarter

The Central Bar, Gateshead

Pot-Pie Bob's

Pot-Pie Bob's – Wellington Street, Gateshead 1977

The Joke Shop

'Look at his paintings and you see scenes that you remember - that Gateshead joke shop by the High Level Bridge, gone but not forgotten.'

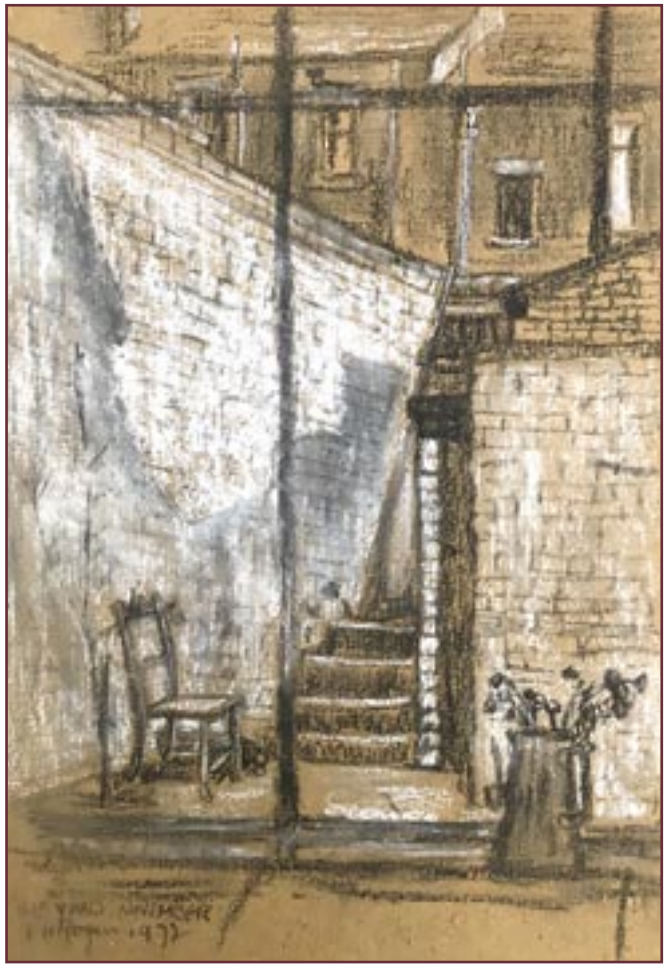
From an article in North Magazine

The Joke Shop, Gateshead-on-Tyne

Redheugh Crossroads

Redheugh Crossroads, Gateshead 1970. Tyne & Wear Museums

Back Yards



Washing Lines

In common with most housewives throughout the country, Monday saw Tyneside mothers preoccupied with getting the weekly wash done and hung out to dry. They were always aware, however, that their hard day's work could end in disaster should a mud-covered football or dirty coal wagon enter their back lane!

Photograph by Trevor Ermel

'Couldn't play chasey in the back lane 'cause you'd get wrong off everybody for running through the weshin!'

'Bikes totally banned. Happy days.'

Yvonne Wilson

'I remember my nanna running out to take the washing in so the coal man could get down her lane in George Street on The Bankies.'

Linda Preston

'The shout would go up that a wagon was on its way up the lane and all the housewives would run out and raise their props high so the washing did not hit the wagon.'

Margaret Maxted

The Corner Shop

The Proposal

Beverley McCallion

The painting below features the Azure Blue public house on Eastbourne Avenue in Gateshead. Beverley purchased it directly from Charlie Rogers at his nearby home. The watercolour is titled Down the Avenues, Gateshead on Tyne. It was set in the location Beverley's husband had proposed to her. A wonderful story and a perfect way to preserve a memory!

Creative Influences and Friendships

Creative Influences and Friendships

Norman Cornish (1919-2014) MBE

'An early exhibition of paintings by Charlie Rogers in the 1960s inspired Spennymoor artist Norman Cornish to travel to Bensham to paint.'

Charles Westberg, Newcastle Evening Chronicle 1998

Wellington St and Hill St Gateshead by Norman Cornish. By kind permission of the Estate of Norman Cornish

Redheugh Park by Norman Cornish. By kind permission of the Estate of Norman Cornish

The Park Road Group

The Park Road Group was a select art club based in Newcastle in the 1950s. Membership was strictly by invitation, and was only offered to local amateur artists who took their art more seriously than simply treating it as a hobby. Its members saw it as an avant-garde movement and called their approach 'environmentalism,' referring to the group's subject matter; their everyday surroundings and working men and women. Artists would gather in the Bigg Market pubs including the Printers Pie. The artists included Harry and Alan Lord, Scott Dobson (Larn Yersel Geordie), Alan Burdon, Dickie Mathieson, Bill Smith, Marshall Atkinson, Charlie Rogers and Norman Cornish.

The First Exhibition

In 1965 Charlie Rogers began attending evening courses at the College of Art and Design in Newcastle where he studied A Level Art. His teacher, Chris McEwan, sent Charlie to meet local artist Harry Lord who ran the Univision Gallery in Newcastle's Bigg Market.

Charlie explained: 'There was going to be a three-man show in March 1965 but the third man dropped out and Harry said to me: 'Would you fill this up with some of your little drawings?' He just mounted them on pieces of cardboard, stuck them up, and that was my first exhibition."

L.S. Lowry (1887-1976)

Norman Cornish's relationship with The Stone Gallery in Newcastle upon Tyne began in 1959. The relationship would last for 21 years.

L.S. Lowry first met Mick and Tilly Marshall at his exhibition in Harrogate in 1961. One day in May 1962 he walked into the Stone Gallery, unexpected, and stayed for the next 14 years. He became a shareholder and a member of the management committee. Tom McGuinness, Sheila Fell and John Peace also exhibited work at the Stone Gallery.

Lowry on the steps of the Stone Gallery. Reproduced with the kind permission of Simon Marshall

The Lowry Exhibition at the Stone Gallery 1968

Norman Cornish and Charlie Rogers visited the 'Nine New Paintings' exhibition by L. S. Lowry held at the Stone Gallery during the summer of 1968. The paintings were not for sale.

Norman drew a sketch titled 'Charlie Rogers looking at Lowry'. It is signed and dated 1968 Stone Gallery.

The sketch includes two paintings which can be found in the exhibition catalogue. The painting Charlie Rogers is looking at is titled 'Going to Work'. The painting to the left is titled 'Man Holding Child'.

Charlie Rogers looking at Lowry, Stone Gallery 1968

Going to Work © The Estate of L.S. Lowry
All Rights Reserved. DACS 2025

Man Holding Child © The Estate of L.S. Lowry
All Rights Reserved. DACS 2025

The Collaboration

During the late 1960s Charlie Rogers was invited to tea by Norman and Sarah Cornish at their home on Whitworth Terrace in Spennymoor. The two artists went out sketching together, ending up at The Hillingdon, a pub located close to the Cornish home. Customers and staff often witnessed Norman sketching in the bar. However on this particular day he was accompanied by another artist - Charlie Rogers.

This undated sketch of ladies at the bar that day is titled 'The Hillingdon, Spennymoor, by me and Norman'. The two artists sketched it together. One of the portraits is titled 'Jenny'.

Jenny

Spennymoor resident Jenny Grimes lived at Chestnut Avenue and was known to Norman Cornish who had previously sketched her portrait. The story goes that Jenny was a regular customer in the local pubs. Occasionally, following a particularly heavy drinking session, it became necessary to take Jenny home in a wheelbarrow.

The Hillingdon, Spennymoor, by me and Norman

Norman Cornish Drawing, Spennymoor 1974 by Charlie Rogers

Vincent van Gogh

Charlie Rogers developed his own unique style of painting. This was influenced by other artists including Vincent van Gogh, Amedeo Modigliani, Albert Marquet, Norman Cornish, Tom McGuinness, L.S. Lowry, Joseph Kirsop and Feliks Topolski.

During an interview Charlie was asked. 'I notice on your walls that you have pictures by Van Gogh, Modigliani and Marquet. You like looking at paintings by other artists?'

Charlie replied. 'Yes, it's not so much a matter of the artist as seeing a picture that strikes you, so that you say "My that's really something!" Often, I've never heard of the artist when this first happens, and then I find myself noticing other things by the same person."'

'Van Gogh had his sunflowers; Monet, sunlit pools of water lilies, and Charlie Rogers has the back streets of Gateshead.'

Charles Westerberg.

A painting by Charlie Rogers in what he called his Van Gogh style

Paris and London

Paris and London

A scene painted by Charlie Rogers of his hotel room during his visit to Paris in 1966

Charlie Rogers described Paris as his favourite city. He first visited in 1964 and in 1970 he said he had visited Paris more than ten times.

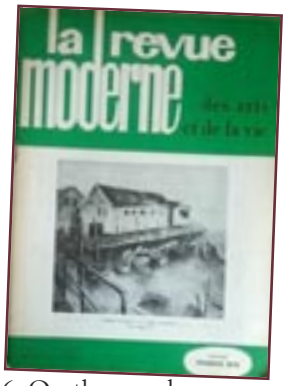
During his earlier visits, Charlie was a regular visitor to the Montmartre region. Here he befriended street artists such as Marius Gerard. Other friends included American novelists and poets Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg.

In later years the family would visit Paris regularly. His wife and son would go sightseeing. Meanwhile Charlie would have time to walk the streets of Paris with sketchpad in hand. The family would reunite later in the day.

A friend once asked, 'Charlie, when you are in Paris how do you decide where to visit?'

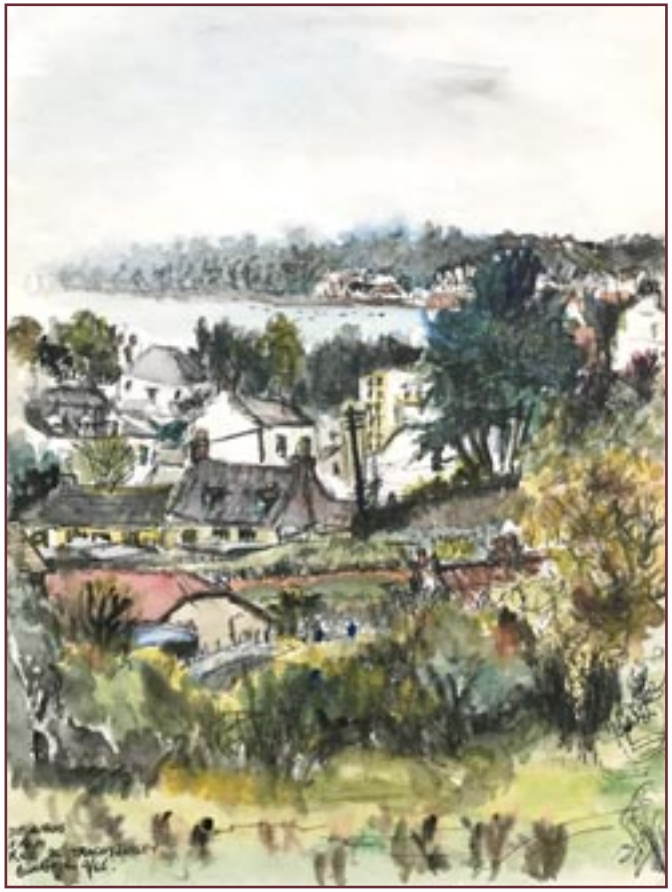
Charlie replied, 'I look at the front of the bus and if I like the look of the name of the town, I get on'.

The following is an excerpt from Le Revue newspaper which reviewed an exhibition of paintings at the Moderne Gallery, Paris in 1964. This was Charlie Rogers first exhibition in a Parisian gallery (unfortunately his surname was misspelt).



The translation reads, *'Charles Rodgers' artistic style could be described as spontaneous. It's street scenes, urban landscapes and characters that he finds particularly interesting. With his sketchbook in his pocket, he immediately draws the scene that's caught his eye, capturing the character or the feel of it in a few of his typical line strokes.'*

Charlie hitchhiked to Paris in 1966. On the way he visited the island of Jersey.



St Aubin from Rue De Trachy Jersey, 9/66

Paris

Having arrived in the French capital,
he produced a collection of Parisian scenes.

Paris 1966

Montmartre 1967

Montmartre 1966

Le Concierge, Paris 1969

Rue Saint-Jacques, Montmartre 1966

'I look at the front of the bus and if I like the look of the name of the town, I get on'.

Charlie Rogers

London

Charlie travelled to London regularly during the early part of his career to gain support for his work. He submitted four of his paintings to the annual Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in Piccadilly.

Hampstead 1992

Dave Cockburn's Story

Dave is a member of Gateshead Art Society. He befriended Charlie Rogers as they sat one day sketching in Saltwell Park.

Charlie told Dave he had an agent in London who regularly bought his paintings for £50 each from the late sixties up to the late seventies. Charlie and his wife Ann decided to go to Paris in 1970. On the way they stopped off at the London gallery that was selling his paintings. Dave said Charlie 'went berserk' when he saw the price tags of up to £500 attached to his paintings on display. 'He was not a happy man.'

Man on a bench,
Berkeley Square London, 18/3/72

Hitchhiking to London

Dennis Donnelly

'Charlie told me how he would hitchhike to London to visit the art galleries. When he could afford it, he would get the train costing £1.50. Staying for one night in a Kings Cross Bed & Breakfast would cost him £3.50. He would later exhibit at the Royal Academy, and on one occasion he was introduced to Princess Margaret.'

This photographbelow shows Charlie seemingly observing Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. The accompanying sketch titled 'A Man Reading, Westminster' is dated 6/67, the date Charlie submitted his first painting for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.

Looking closely at the photograph we see Charlie is staring at the elderly gentleman in the middle ground reading his newspaper. This is the figure he was subsequently inspired to sketch.

Charlie appearing to look at Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament

Piccadilly 1985

A man reading. Westminster 6/67

Family

Family

Ann

Charlie married late in life, at the age of 43. He met his wife Ann at The Mayfair Ballroom in Newcastle in 1972. Ann was born in Haltwhistle, Northumberland in 1942. The couple married in 1973.

Ann was a great admirer of her husband's work and supported Charlie throughout his career.

Prior to meeting Charlie, she worked as a librarian at Haltwhistle and Hexham. She later worked as a librarian at Gateshead Technical College.

Family photographs were few and far between in the Rogers home. In their place were paintings and sketches.

Ann getting ready. 11.3.78

Ann Seated 1972

Charlie Junior

To celebrate the birth of his son, Charlie painted this scene of the Bigg Market in Newcastle titled 'For Charlie Junior'. The market was one of Charlie's favourite painting locations, making it a fitting tribute to his only child.

Charlie Junior featured in some of his father's most intimate and personal works.

Father and son

Charlie Bathing '76

For Charlie Junior

Charlie in a box 18.4.76

Image 1967

Pop Reading 6/65

Pop

The Bottle of Broon. Charlie included a bottle of Brown Ale in many of his interior and bar paintings, particularly when his father 'Pop' features in the same painting. It seems this was Pop's drink of choice.

Newcastle Brown Ale is perceived in the UK as a working-man's beer, with a long association with heavy industry, the traditional economic staple of the North East of England.

My Father Asleep 1966

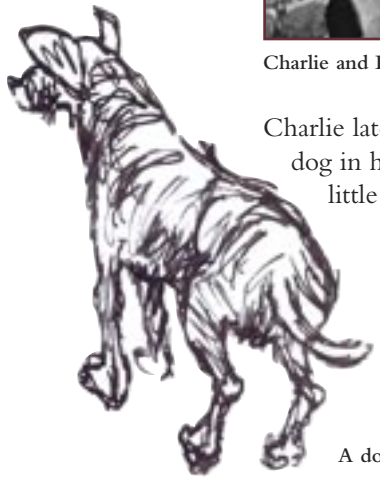
Bruce

A black dog appears in many of Charlie's early oil paintings and sketches.

As a young lad, Charlie Rogers visited his local swimming pool at nearby Shipcote. As he began to walk home he noticed a dog following behind. Charlie took the dog home and after a little persuasion the dog became a member of the family.

Charlie and Bruce. Photo from an edition of North Magazine

Charlie later told his son including the image of a black dog in his paintings was his way of remembering his little pal.



A dog 1972

Self-portraits

The Creative Process

The Creative Process

'Someone asked if I just stand in the street with an easel and I said, "I haven't got an easel."

The love for painting outdoors

The harsh winter weather in the North East meant his wife Ann became well practised in ensuring Charlie was adequately dressed for painting outdoors. His clothing was often adapted to accommodate an extensive range of artist materials.

During an interview Charlie Rogers was asked. 'You said that in your first picture you used a pen and ink technique. What came after the first picture - how did your work develop?'

Charlie answered. 'I had to start working outside, so I had to find something more efficient than bottles of ink and pens - and I started using black ball point pens which flow nicely and are very good for rapid sketching.'

Saltwell Park 23.04.2003

The Studio

Charlie Rogers painted on his 1920s oak draw-leaf table in the back reception room.

'He prefers to paint from his kitchen using a table instead of an easel.

'I used to try all sorts - crayon, ball pens, pencils, anything - and I would try all different sorts of paper.

What intrigued me more than anything was fiddling with the mediums.' Charlie Rogers

Extracts from Newcastle Chronicle articles.

The Tools of the Trade

Charlie Rogers rarely used a traditional easel. For outdoor work he would carry a sketch pad, two small palettes, a black biro, sheets of paper in various sizes and an assortment of brushes, pencils and other drawing materials.

When working at home he would paint in the dining room. He worked on a 1920s oak drawer leaf dining table accompanied by four Queen Anne-style chairs. A jar containing brushes and quills was permanently positioned at the centre of the table, even during mealtimes.

Some of Charlie's watercolours include the impressed three letter initials CHR. The addition of a stamp mark followed Charlie's decision to invest in a personalised ink pad set.

The Blue Jar

Warwick Street, Gateshead-on-Tyne 9/65

Preparation drawings and sketches

This is believed to be a preliminary sketch of a scene that would inspire Charlie Rogers to enter a second submission to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1972.

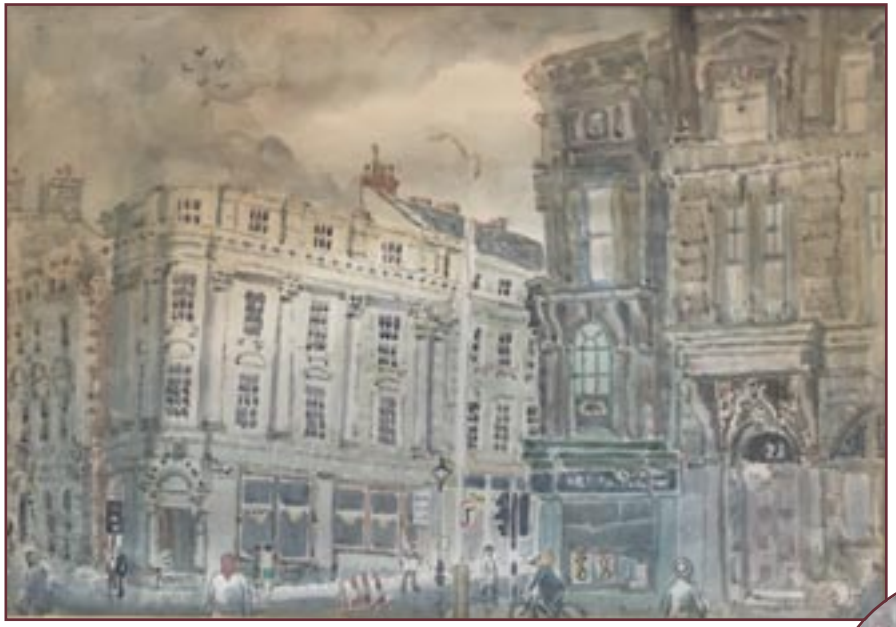
Scraps of paper

Particularly during the early days, the cost of art materials required Charlie to improvise by painting on old letters, magazines or even on the front cover of the Saturday Evening Chronicle sports supplement, 'The Pink'.

Newcastle

Newcastle

Newcastle-on-Tyne From Windmill Hills, Gateshead. May 1986



In this painting titled Mosley Street Newcastle-upon Tyne, 1990, Charlie Rogers has included an image of himself

Haymarket, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1995

'I prefer street scenes to anything else. I try to see things from an angle which will exaggerate the quaintness of the scene.'

Charlie Rogers

Castle, Moot Hall and All Saints Newcastle-on-Tyne 1999

1984

Cattle Market Entrance, Scotswood Road, Newcastle '79

Boats on the River Tyne

At Sandgate, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1983

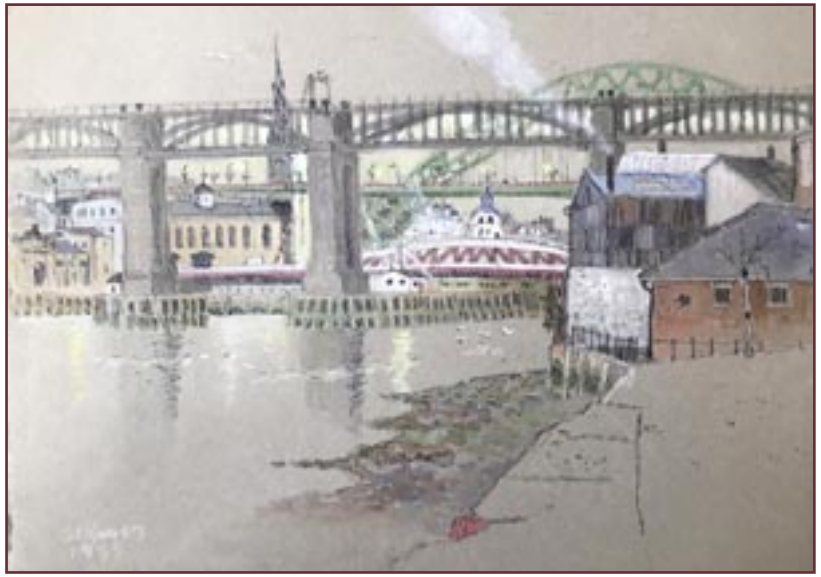
Dredger, Newcastle 1983

Old Boats, Newcastle 1983

Boat and Quayside 1984

River Scenes

River and St Cuthbert's, Gateshead



1985

1972

'I used to like to draw the old Baltic, when Kittiwakes used to nest on it. That was before they cleaned it up.'

'The mess they made on it gave it some texture.'

'Texture and personality are missing from many modern buildings.'

Charlie Rogers

Scenes of the Bridges

Scenes from the Panorama Restaurant

Charlie was particularly fond of painting the scene from the Panorama Restaurant at Shephards department store, a grand, old-fashioned emporium that attracted shoppers from across Tyneside.

From Shephards, Gateshead-on-Tyne 1976

Photograph by Trevor Ermel

Scenes from the Bridges

'You don't make use of photography, then?'

'Hell, no. I just scribble down what I see on the spot and to hell with the chocolate box.'

Charlie Rogers

High Level Bridge 1969

The Side and Tyne Bridge 2012

The Side from the High Level Bridge

Quayside scenes

Fish Market, Quayside, Newcastle. 1979

Guildhall and Side, Newcastle-on-Tyne 2006

Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne. 1984

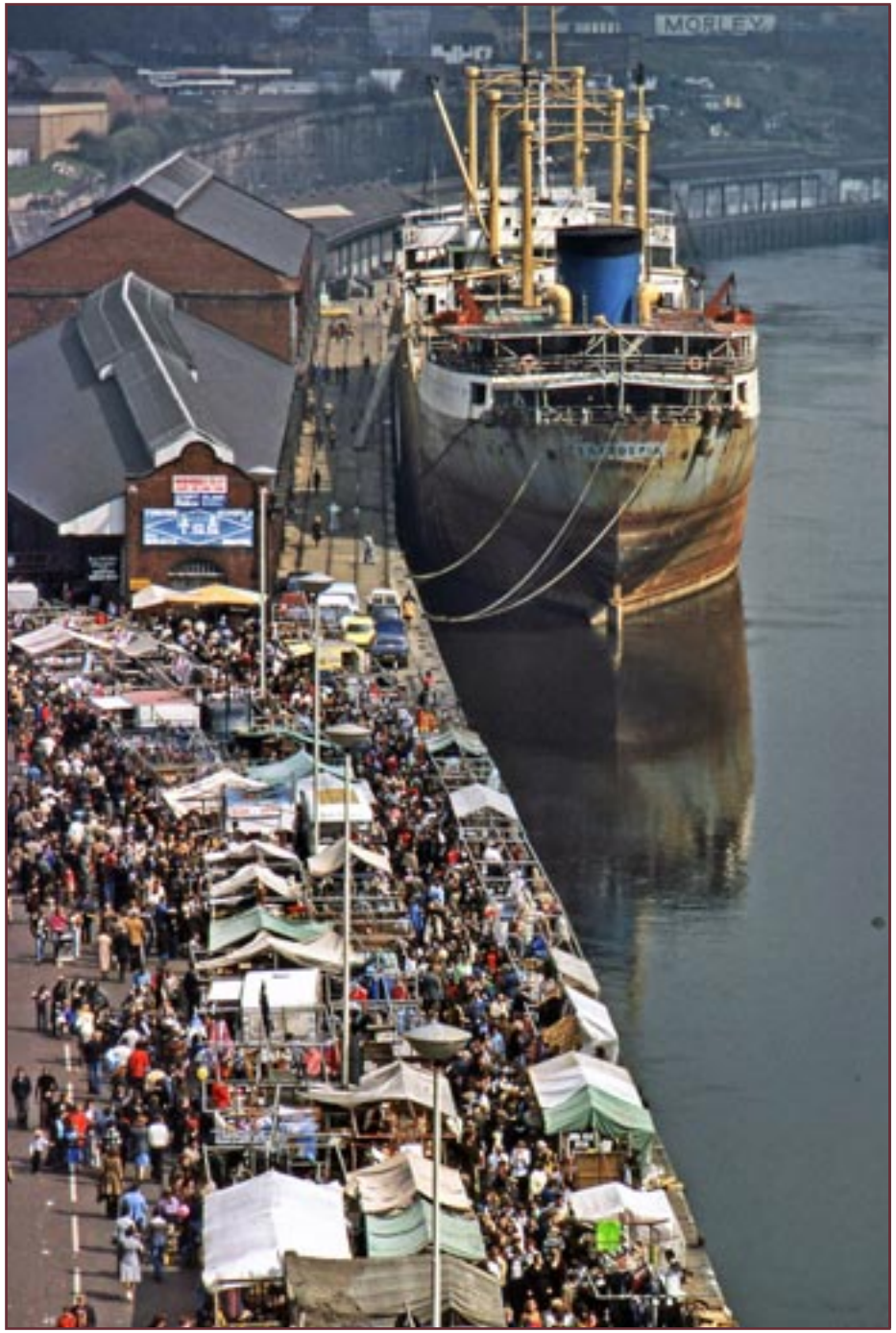
Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1981

The Quayside Sunday Market

Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sunday 1987

Towel Sellers, Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne

Pavement Artist, Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1977



Photograph by Trevor Ermel

Juggler

Pavement Artist, 75

Tall Ships

The Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race started on the River Tyne on 17th July 1993, with 121 tall ships sailing to Bergen in Norway. The golden age of shipping was recreated on the Newcastle quayside as a flotilla of tall-masted ships flying flags from all over the world dropped anchor in the Tyne. The spectacle of the sailing ships, ranging from large square-rigged vessels to smaller boats, created a carnival atmosphere appreciated by the snap-happy crowds onshore.

Charlie Rogers captured this event in his watercolour painting titled 'Tall Ships in the Tyne'.

Charlie viewed the scene from the High Level bridge.

Tall Ships in the Tyne July 1993

The Throwaway

This rooftop scene looking across Newcastle Quayside was not regarded by Charlie Rogers as being worthy of his signature. He tore it in half and left it for the bin man. Fortunately it was recovered and bought for a knockdown price by a customer.

The tear can clearly be seen.

The watercolour painting is dated 1986 and remains untitled.

The Bigg Market

Bigg Market 1971

The Bigg Market is a site of historical significance dating back to Middle Ages when it was a thriving marketplace that formed an important part of the Great North Road. The market was named after a type of coarse barley known as Bigg barley, widely sold from the stalls. Other nearby markets included the Cloth Market and the Groat Market. The Bigg Market is located close to Newcastle Cathedral.

'One of my favourite spots was the Bigg Market. It was a smashing place with something different always going on.' Charlie Rogers

The Bigg Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1995

Stalls and Umbrellas, Bigg Market Newcastle. 1976

Night Meeting Bigg Market, Newcastle 1968

'You have to take cars out or you don't see the people.'
Charlie Rogers

Grey Street

Grey Street is one of the most architecturally striking streets in the United Kingdom. It is a magnificent example of John Dobson's Architecture.

'I do quite a lot of work in Grey Street and down the Bigg Market because you can stand in a doorway without being bothered and have a doodle.' Charlie Rogers

Up Grey Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 2000

Theatre Royal, Grey Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. May 2002

The Grainger Market

'The most difficult, and most important thing an artist should capture is atmosphere.' Charlie Rogers

This bustling Grade I listed covered market dates back to 1835 and is often described as the beating heart of Newcastle. Its vibrant scenes, huge variety of shops and the constant flow of local characters along its historic alleyways inspired Charlie to produce many memorable works.

Grainger Market Newcastle 1978

Grainger Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1995

Grainger Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne 1989

The Penny Bazaar 1984

The Blackett Street Story

Jack B Burness

'Charlie Rogers would occasionally visit my print shop Whizz Print on Whitehall Road.

On one visit he recalled the day he was sketching in the Eldon Square area of central Newcastle. He had decided his best vantage point for a scene of Blackett Street was a nearby pedestrian walkover at Eldon Square. As he stood there working a security guard asked him to move. Charlie refused. After a while a second security man arrived and insisted he went on his way. Charlie again ignored the request, all the while continuing to sketch. A short time later a policeman was summoned, who again insisted Charlie move away, pointing out that he was blocking the thoroughfare. Eventually five security guards and a policeman were at the scene. Charlie paid them little heed and carried on sketching. Only after completing his sketch did he gather his painting materials, turn to them and say, "ok, I'm done," before walking away.'

Blackett Street Newcastle-on-Tyne, January/February 2012

I would occasionally ask Charlie if he wanted to go and have a cup of coffee at the cafe at Gateshead Library. Charlie's answer was always the same. "Do you think I'm made of money?" However, we usually ended up enjoying a cuppa and having a chat. Charlie Rogers could be obstinate at times, particularly if someone was trying to stop him sketching.'

Blackett Street Newcastle-on-Tyne, January/February 2012

Jack Burness bought this watercolour painting titled Westgate Road at an exhibition of Charlie's work held at Gateshead Library.

The Hoppings

Back Lanes

Typically, the streets of Tyneside are divided by back lanes. They were certainly one of Charlie's favourite subjects. Many locals recall seeing Charlie standing with a sketch pad in the back lanes of Gateshead and Newcastle.

Azure Blue and St Chad's, Gateshead-on-Tyne 2016

Lane at Shipcote, Gateshead-on-Tyne 2015

Beyond Tyneside

Beyond Tyneside

An interviewer once asked Charlie, while looking out of his dining room window at the tree outside, 'There's not a great deal of nature in your paintings. I know you love being outdoors - have you ever gone into the country beyond Gateshead?'

Charlie replied, 'Well, I used to go up Weardale a few years ago - maybe the most beautiful part of England - and I did a few landscapes there, including one of a couple of cows standing against a wall. But there's hardly anything of the countryside in it - it's mainly the shapes of these black and white cows staring at you over the wall with a few fences and a bit of building in the background.'

Tom Pickard - Poet

'Much of Rogers' experience (as available through his work) is not accessible to the middle or ruling classes, (perceptive individuals aside) in our own small part of the world (even those that live a mere mile or two away from some of the scenes depicted) - yet it is recognisable to a sensitive working class in Bolton, London, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Dublin, Glasgow, Cardiff and elsewhere throughout the western industrial world. I have seen paintings in San Francisco, Chicago and New York which have a similar quality.'

Askrigg, Yorkshire 1983

An Alleyway at York 1978

Knaresborough, Yorks 22.8 2001

House at Harrogate 2002

Market at Alnwick 1991

From Crossgate, Durham City 26.6.2003

Imagery

Imagery

The Artist of the Drunken Lamp Post

In many of his street scenes Charlie would include lampposts leaning to one side which gave them a drunken appearance.

'I love the old streets of Newcastle and Gateshead where the lamp-posts lean over.' Charlie Rogers

Shadows

Nocturnes

Small Stall, Gallowgate '91

Windmill Hills 15.2.81

Snow Scenes

When snow fell on the rooftops of Tyneside, the opportunity for Charlie to embrace one of his favourite genres became irresistible. These snow-laden street scenes illustrate his ability to merge subtle hues of blue, grey and lilac into the white of a wintry landscape. Yellow ochre was added to depict the thawing snow.

Church Scenes

From the mid-1960s, the content of Charlie's creative output was dominated by his immediate surroundings and the industrial landscapes he observed on his walks through the streets of Gateshead and Newcastle. High on his list of favourite painting subjects were churches, their timeless ecclesiastical architecture providing limitless inspiration for his artistic imagination.

Zion Chapel

United Reform Church

Sunderland Road Methodist Church

St Cuthbert's Church

Pubs

Bridge Hotel

Adelphi

The Central

Lord Collingwood

Characters

Tyneside Characters

Bobby Thompson 1985

Small Man 1972

Vagrant's Head 1973

Street Characters

Beggar Man, Newcastle/Tyne '92

Man with Stick 1966

Tramp's Head, Newcastle 29.12 73

1978

The Rag and Bone Man

The rag and bone man was a familiar figure who regularly visited the back lanes of Tyneside during the 1960s and '70s, lost to social and technological change.

Rag Cart 1972

The Newspaper Sellers

Newspaper sellers were an everyday sight on the bustling streets of Newcastle and Gateshead. These much-loved street characters, now lost to modernisation, were captured by Charlie in his paintings and sketches.

Seated Newsboy, Newcastle 1977

1970. Painted on a copy of the Newcastle Chronicle Saturday sporting special "The Pink"

Rag Barrow 1978

Newsboy '74

Trumpeter & Paper-sellers, Monument, Newcastle 1995

The Street Traders

'I just paint what I see. I see shapes and I paint them.'
Charlie Rogers

Bigg Market 1972

Ice Cream Hut at Tynemouth 30.8.96

Flowers

Newcastle Flower man 1971

1976

Flower man, Newcastle 1972

1995

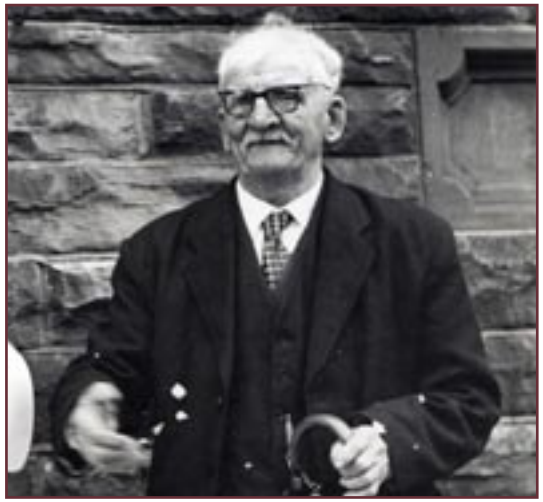
Observations of People

Alfie Green - Portobello

'Rogers is one of the outstanding artists of the North East School. His highly individual work is sometimes reminiscent of Lowry, sometimes of Cornish, Buffet or Van Gogh but imitating none of these artists.'

Derek Kirkup, Director Percy Gallery 1973

Alfie Green 1966, by kind permission of the Green family



Bar Scenes

Eating and Drinking

Fish and chips was an important part of the staple diet for much of the population of Tyneside throughout the twentieth century. Charlie Rogers drew inspiration from his observations of the dining habits of the regular people he observed each day.

Conversations

A Discussion 1975

St James's, London 20.5.78

Contemplation

Charlie Rogers was attracted to painting everyday people seemingly deep in thought.

Readers

Readers (continued)

Figures

The extensive collection of Charlie Rogers sketchbooks includes figures in various poses. He always had a scrap of paper and black biro to hand to capture a moment in time and store it away for future reference.

Interior Scenes

The Family Furniture

Charlie Rogers found subject material in his own home. The inclement weather of a north east winter meant he needed subjects that were indoors and close to hand. Favoured subjects were painted and sketched repeatedly.

The Kitchen

Industrial Scenes

Industrial Scenes

'The subjects of Rogers' pictures are the things and places that no-one else noticed until they had disappeared.

A quiet, inconspicuous figure, he has spent hours scouring the derelict areas of Tyneside looking for fragments of the past which his artist's eye and hand could turn into evocative pictures.

Terraced houses crowding the steep slopes of Gateshead, quaint Victorian public houses suddenly given stunning architectural prominence by the work of the bulldozer, industrial relics starkly beautiful in their decay.

There is a nostalgia and poetry in Rogers' work - a gift for seeing the beautiful in the commonplace. But like all good painting it is best savoured directly.'

Derek Kirkup, Director, Percy Gallery 1973

Dunston-on-Tyne 1990

81st Birthday Painting

81st Birthday Painting

The Last Painting

Charlie Rogers' final, partly completed painting was inspired by the view from his bedroom window at Aspen Court Care Home in Gateshead.

The Legacy

Tom Pickard's Tribute

Tom is a highly respected Newcastle-born poet and documentary film maker who was an important initiator of the movement known as the British Poetry Revival. During the 1960s Tom co-founded the Morden Tower Reading Series in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Here he befriended Charlie Rogers and became a supporter of his work.

In 1973, aged 27, Tom attended a Charlie Rogers exhibition at Whitley Bay Library.

Charlie Rogers

As fast as Tyneside's characteristic buildings fall Charlie Rogers seems to be there to catch them. Just before the demolition-man's mechanical hammer swings into the crutch of The Bacchus or The Collingwood, (name your own), Charlie Rogers came along with some instrument to draw with and a sharp and perspective eye to record some of the most exciting aspects of the area, even as they fell, in some cases. As the speculative boot (with full blessing and encouragement from councils) rips out the hearts of our cities to replace them with disconnected concrete blocks reflecting pretty accurately the minds behind the designs, Charlie Rogers is cast in an interesting role.

Documentation is an added benefit of his art, which reflects the traditional activities and environment of working class Tyneside and its culture, which is comparable with that of the Celtic communities. Certainly we have as rich a heritage of song, story, literature and art.

In the field of literature, Basil Bunting, Sid Chaplin and Jack Common are amongst the moderns who are in the mainstream of 'English Literature' (it's time we dismantled that term) and three men alone who span a couple of hundred years in the visual arts. John Martin, Thomas Bewick and Norman Cornish provide us with work which stands the description of 'masterpieces' in anybody's language.

I feel it's this tradition Charlie Rogers has inherited and reflects, (at least Bewick and Cornish, John Martin's mystical style is all his own and lacks the earthy quality of the other two). His work is not ' local' in the sense of that word which is most current and is I think the extent of our City Fathers' thinking - but possessing a true locale. This in my mind, puts it in line with such other major art which is rooted and reflects the depth of life around it, giving it a universal quality.

Much of Rogers' experience (as available through his work) is not accessible to the middle or ruling classes, (perceptive individuals aside) in our own small part of the world (even those that live a mere mile or two away from some of scenes depicted) - yet it is recognisable to a sensitive working class in Bolton, London, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Dublin, Glasgow, Cardiff and elsewhere throughout the western industrial world.

I have seen paintings in San Francisco, Chicago and New York which have a similar quality.

To look at paintings of this calibre we must drop the blinkers of fashion, rules of middle class taste, and parochial 'perception' (or parochial lack of) and see what good artists are born anywhere, and they, by their nature have an immediate locality available to their particular sensitivity, which they make use of to express the qualities of life most central to their own being.

As any artist should do, Charlie Rogers awakens a sense of wonder and joy in the world he inhabits and pictures for us.

It makes the belly-thump of the redevelopment hammer more painful and that also is a main quality. (It is the function of bourgeoisie art only to 'entertain' and provide escapism).

It would be doing Mr Rogers no service to draw attention to the destruction of our human and cultural environment in an exhibition catalogue if in fact he didn't already awaken the comparison himself, but he does.

For me the best of his pictures re-affirm my belief in the quality of working class culture which is daily under the boot of commercial interests and worse, the betrayal by those elected to improve and not destroy, to nourish and not deprive.

Apart from the sheer pleasure of his individual artistry (which is before your eyes and needs no boost from me) each of his paintings in juxtaposition with what is happening immediately outside this building in similar scenes, describes a culture which is being subjected to the official cold shoulder from those who should subsidise it, to attempted extermination, often from those who were born into, then denied it through consequent election to positions of power. Make no mistakes, these works are produced under fire and the vigour of style and vivid (but controlled) colours reflect it.

We really need a large exhibition to show the variety and growth of this painter within his short career. We also need a more careful cataloguing of the versatility of his hand than I have had time to here.

For me he continually produces work that excites.

Tom Pickard
16th September 1973.

David Whetstone's Tribute

Award-winning art journalist, critic and editor David Whetstone wrote a number of articles featuring Charlie Rogers. The piece below appeared in Scene, the Newcastle Journal's weekly art page, in 1988.

As Charlie's popularity grew, his paintings could be found in galleries in London and Paris.

Closer to home, his work featured regularly in local and national newspaper articles and on several occasions Charlie appeared personally on television programmes. His first TV appearance was for the BBC in March 1965.

From Scene:

It all started with football.

When I asked self-taught artist Charlie Rogers what inspired him to take up pen and paintbrush, he begins his reply: "Well I was interested in football…"

This is not as barmy as it might sound. A knee injury sustained during a Sunday match back in the early sixties kept him off work and drove him to sketch the view from his aunt's window in Bensham.

That first little picture is still in the artist's possession and explains why Charlie Rogers is now as dedicated to painting as he once was to playing football. It was the first of many - and over the years a considerable talent has been nurtured, a recognisable style honed.

Charlie Rogers worked as a groundsman for Durham County Council until 17 years ago when he was made redundant. His work base is his kitchen table at home in Bensham and he attends the Tuesday night meetings of the Gateshead Art Society.

He is a modest man and yet his recent exhibition at Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery suggests that he deserves to be better known.

He has been represented at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead has some of his work in its collection.

Most of the early paintings are oils - street scenes of Bensham which has long since buckled to the bulldozer. These pictures have a considerable historical value, accurately detailing the people, the signs, the shopfronts, the things that change gradually and unnoticed before disappearing altogether.

Much of the later work is in pen and watercolour and features Newcastle landmarks like the river bridges, St Nicholas's Cathedral and the Theatre Royal, as well as less fêted landmarks like Pudding Chare. Charlie Rogers turned his attention over the river as more and more of his original source of inspiration was razed.

In the earlier pictures the colours weave a spell. "I just paint what I see." the artist declares. "I see shapes and I paint them."

Those shapes ring uncannily true while his colours are a constant surprise - streets become dazzling silver/white and brickwork ranges from ochre purple through myriad shades.

The later paintings are more delicate and translucent. Along with his eye for colour, though, it is Charles Rogers' meticulous draughtsmanship which impresses. His figures are alive, a little sketch of a brewer's dray horse executed from an awkward elevated position is a gem of accuracy and character.

For the keen footballer, art became a twin obsession. "I used to go out and lose myself."

"When I saw one picture I used to see more and more. I used to carry bits of paper and sketch."

"I'd be out on the pop at night and I'd enjoy walking back because at night everything seems to be simpler and you notice the shapes more."

One recent picture which particularly impressed me landed the artist in a spot of bother in court. Not that he was arrested or anything sinister like that.

He was sketching outside Newcastle Crown Court during the recent police perjury trial. A barrister spotted him and said the public could go in and listen to the proceedings if they wished. Charlie Rogers entered the public gallery and afterwards started sketching. But the eagle eye of a court clerk fell upon him and he was told he couldn't sketch without obtaining the prior permission of the judge, in this case Myrella Cohen. By that time, he had enough - in his head if not on paper - to go home and do a complete pen and watercolour picture showing the scene from the public gallery. According to gallery curator Mara Wood, this picture, bearing a modest price tag of £65, was "fought over" by members of the public when it appeared. The winner of the scrap is exceedingly fortunate for the prize is a delightful work of art.

I mention to its creator that his style reminds me of the famous illustrator Edward Ardizonne. One of his paintings, he replies, once hung alongside one of Ardizonne's at the summer exhibition.

A solicitor has apparently promised to seek permission for Charlie Rogers to enter the public gallery and sketch without breaking any rules. I sincerely hope it is granted.

I would add a suggestion. As the courts at the Moot Hall, overlooking Newcastle Quayside, are shortly to be overshadowed by the new courts complex being built on the Quayside itself, perhaps a courtroom artist-in-residence might be a good way of recording the way things are now. Charlie Rogers is clearly the man for such a task. Perhaps Northern Arts or someone in legal circles might think about it. The results would certainly make it worthwhile.

David Whetstone

The Final Days

Charlie Rogers died at Aspen Court Care Home in Gateshead on April 27, 2020.

He resided there for six months and was one of eleven residents lost to the first wave of the Covid pandemic.

Several of Charlie's former carers visited the 'World of Charlie Rogers' exhibition at the Come View My Art Gallery to pay tribute to their former resident.

A selection of Charlie's work, including a biography and other items were delivered to the care home and are now on display in the reception area.

Thank you to the members of staff for their support.

Exhibition Chronology

Paintings by Charlie Rogers featured in more than 50 exhibitions during his lifetime:

1965 Univision Gallery, Newcastle
1966 Westgate Gallery, Newcastle
1966 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
1967 Royal Academy, London
1967 Royal Society of British Artists, London
1968 Scottish Royal Academy, Edinburgh
1969 Whitley Bay Library
1970 Portal Gallery, London
1972 Royal Academy, London
1972 Figurative Arts North, Newcastle
1973 International Drawing Biennial, Middlesbrough
1973 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
1974 Salford Art Gallery, Manchester
1975 Royal Academy, London
1977 DLI Museum Exhibition, Durham
1977 Trident Television Fellow
1978 Dovecot Art Centre, Stockton
1978 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
1978 Biddick Art Centre, Washington
1980 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
1981 Royal Academy, London
1982 Durham Festival
1984 Gallery Seven, Newcastle
1985 Queens Hall, Hexham
1985 Holst Gallery, Ryton
1985 Upstairs Gallery, London
1988 Polytechnic Gallery, Newcastle
1989 Brown's Gallery, Newcastle
1990 Library Gallery, Gateshead
1990 Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery
1990 Laing Collection, Newcastle
1991 Brown's Gallery, Newcastle
1991 Bondgate Gallery, Alnwick
1991 Laing Collection, Newcastle
1991 Vicarage Cottage Gallery, North Shields
1992 Brown's Gallery, Newcastle
1992 Laing Collection, Newcastle
1993 Laing Collection, Newcastle
1994 Royal Charity Exhibition, Newcastle
1996 20th Century Watercolours, Laing Art Gallery
1999 20th Century Watercolours, Shipley Art Gallery
1999 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
2000 Gateshead Millennium Book
2001 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
2004 Bensham etc Shipley Art Gallery
2005 Art of Northumbria by Marshall Hall
2006 Library Gallery, Gateshead Library
2006 Guildhall, Newcastle
2009 Town and Country
2009 Bridges, Shipley Art Gallery
2010 Bensham Grove, Gateshead
2012 Mood Gallery, Newcastle
2016 Low Fell Library, Gateshead
2024 Belonging. Laing Art Gallery

The Final Exhibition

The Ann Rogers Memorial Exhibition

24th November 2016 – 7th January 2017

Charlie Rogers' last exhibition was at Low Fell Library in Gateshead. This was a retrospective exhibition dedicated to the memory of his late wife Ann who had passed away in 2015. The library hosted the exhibition over the festive season. Charlie was now aged 86 and Charlie's friend Dennis Donnelly curated the exhibition.

A visitor to the exhibitions recalls meeting Charlie...
"Why do you want to take my Picture" asked Charlie.
"Because I love all of your work and it has given me and so many oyter people lot's of enjoyment and pleasure over the years" I replied.
Charlie shrugged and then we had a nice chat. Just after this Charlie introduced me to Dennis Donnelly, who is the proud owner of a lot of Charlie's paintings and prints.
He has produced a calendar of Charlie's paintings with the proceeds going towards CLARTS.
Well done Dennis.

Chronology – Charles Henry Rogers

1930
Charles Henry Rogers is born to Francis and Grace Rogers on 16th January 1930 at 239, Westbourne Avenue, Gateshead. He is the younger of two brothers.

1935
Attends Kelvin Grove Elementary School, Gateshead.

1939
Evacuated to Bishop Auckland in County Durham for five years with older brother Frank after outbreak of WWII.

1942
Ann Rogers, nee Henderson, is born in Haltwhistle, Northumberland.

1946
Employed as an office boy.

1948
Begins his national service with the RAF.
After leaving the RAF, his jobs include working as a TV engineer for Rediffusion and working for the Post Office.
Begins working as a playing fields groundsman for Durham County Council.

1950
Participates in a football trial for Sunderland Football Club Limited.

1963
Suffers a football injury and decides to create a painting during his week-long recuperation. He paints the view of the back lane opposite the home of his aunt Violet.
Afterwards he wrote "I had become bitten by the bug".

1964
Visits Paris for the first time.
Features in art magazine La Revue.
Submits his first painting for the Gateshead Art Society at the Shipley Art Gallery.
His first painting exhibited in the Gateshead Art Society is titled "October Sky".

1965
Begins attending evening art classes at the College of Art and Design on Northumberland Road, Newcastle.
His teacher, Chris McEwan, sends him to see local artist Harry Lord who runs the Univision Gallery in the Bigg Market, Newcastle.
Exhibits for the first time in a three-man exhibition at the Univision Gallery on 24th March.
Appears on BBC Look North News the following day.
Meets Norman Cornish for the first time at the Univision Gallery.

1966
Visits Paris.
Visits Rue De Trachy, St Helier, Jersey.
Exhibits in the Scott Dobson Gallery, The Side, Newcastle.
Exhibits in the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.
Exhibits in the Westgate Gallery, Newcastle.

1967
Exhibits in the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition in London for the first time. His entry is "October morning: Cotfield Street, Gateshead".
Exhibits in the Royal Society of British Artists exhibition in London.

1968
Exhibits at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh.
Visits the Stone Gallery in Newcastle, accompanied by Norman Cornish.
Cornish sketches Charlie. The sketch is titled "Charlie Rogers looking at Lowry" Stone Gallery 1968.

1969
Visits Paris.
First one-man exhibition at Whitley Bay Library.

1971
Made redundant from his job as a groundsman by Durham County Council.
Exhibits in the Portal Gallery, London.
Paints "Lowry in Manchester" 1971.
September
Norman Cornish and Charlie Rogers produce a sketch together titled "The Hillingdon, Spennymoor by me and Norman".
Exhibits in the Newcastle Festival.

1972
Exhibits in the Royal Academy Summer exhibition in London for the second time. The painting is titled "Street meeting with snow, Gateshead".
Exhibition in Figurative Arts North, Newcastle.
Exhibition in the Cobblestone Gallery, Yarm.
Meets Ann Henderson at The Mayfair Ballroom in Newcastle

1973
Charlie and Ann are married in August.
Exhibits in the International Drawing Biennial, Middlesbrough.
Exhibition of 36 paintings at the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.
Exhibition at Whitley Bay Library.
Produces "L.S. Lowry at Albert Square, Manchester" on 16 May 1973.

1974
Officially becomes a professional artist.
Exhibition in Salford Art Gallery, Manchester.
Charles Junior is born.
Produces "Cornish Drawing Spennymoor 1974".

1975
Exhibits at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in London for the third time. Submits "From Shephard's, Gateshead".

1976
Appears on Tyne Tees Television programme Northern Life.

1977
One man exhibition at The DLI Museum and Arts Centre, Durham.
Becomes a Trident Television Fellow.
Exhibition in Stocksfield Studios.

1978
Exhibition in Dovecote Art Centre, Stockton.
Exhibits in Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.
One-man exhibition in Biddick Farm Art Centre, Washington.

1979
Exhibits in Stocksfield Studio Summer Exhibition.

1980
Two-man exhibition in the Shipley Art Gallery together with Marshall Atkinson. Judith Irwin arranged the exhibition. The intention was to tour the region, taking culture out of institutions directly to the people to make it an everyday experience. The locations included a local library, residential tower block and town centre department store.
The Rogers family visit Salford and attend a Lowry exhibition at the University of Salford.

1981
Exhibits at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition for the fourth time. Submits "Church at Felling on Tyne, Gateshead".
Attends the Midsummer Eve Soirée on 23 June. He is introduced to HRH The Prince of Wales.

1982
Exhibits at Durham Festival.
Attends Northern Life Magazine Event at the Laing Art Gallery. Accompanied by Sid Chaplin, Marshall Atkinson and Vince Rae.

1984
Exhibits at Gallery Seven, Newcastle.

1985
The Rogers family move to 249, Windsor Avenue, Gateshead.
Exhibition in Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Hexham.
Exhibits in Holst Gallery, Ryton.
Exhibition in Upstairs Gallery, London.
Exhibits in Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery.

1986
Travels to Paris.

1988
Exhibition in Polytechnic Gallery, Newcastle 10th August to 2nd September.
Exhibits at Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.

1989
Moves to Low Fell, Gateshead.
Exhibition in Brown Art Gallery in Newcastle.
Participates in The Frank Forrest Project Exhibition.
Exhibits in the Federation of Northern Art Society Exhibition.

1990
Travels to Paris.
Exhibition in the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
Exhibits at Gateshead Central Library Gallery.
Exhibits in Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery in joint Christmas exhibition with Norman Cornish, Tom McGuinness, Joy Girvin, Derek Dalton and Tom Bromly.

1991
Exhibition in Brown's Gallery, Newcastle
Exhibits in the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
Shows work in the Vicarage Cottage Gallery.
Exhibits in Bondgate Gallery, Alnwick.
Participates in the Federation of Northern Art Societies Annual Exhibition at the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.

1992
Exhibits in Brown's Gallery, Newcastle.
Exhibits in the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.

1993
Exhibits at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.

1994
Exhibits at the Royal Charity Exhibition opened by Princess Margaret at the Laing Art Gallery.

1996
Exhibits at the Shipley Art Gallery.

1998
Exhibits at Gateshead Art Society's Golden Jubilee Exhibition at the Shipley Art Gallery.

1999
Participates in 20th Century Watercolours at the Shipley Art Gallery.

2000
Gateshead Art Society Exhibition at the Shipley Art Gallery.

2001
Exhibits at Gateshead Art Society Millennium Exhibition at the Shipley Art Gallery.

2004
One-man Bensham etc. exhibition at the Shipley Art Gallery running from February to May 16th, including 40 paintings.
Features in an interview on Tyne Tees Television.

2005
Participates in the Artists of Northumberland Exhibition.

2006
One-man Gateshead etc. etc. exhibition at Gateshead Central Library Gallery from 25th November to 30th December.
Writes Bensham etc. etc. – a hand-written letter revealing the circumstances of a sports injury which indirectly resulted in him becoming an artist.
Participates in the Gateshead Art Society exhibition at the Guildhall, Quayside, Newcastle.

2009
Exhibits in the Town and Country Exhibition and the Newcastle Bridges Exhibition.
Exhibits in the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.

2010
One-man exhibition at Bensham Grove Community Centre, Gateshead on 6th September.

2012
Exhibits at The Mood Gallery, Newcastle.

2015
Ann Rogers dies.

2016
The Ann Rogers Memorial Exhibition : Charlie Rogers A Retrospective Exhibition.
Charlie's final exhibition at Low Fell Library from 24th November 2016 to 11th February 2017.

2019
Charlie Rogers is taken into care. He continues to paint up until his final days.

2020
Charlie Rogers died on 27th April, 2020.
He and Ann are buried together at Saltwell cemetery.

2023
The World of Charlie Rogers exhibition begins at the Come View My Art Gallery in Gateshead

2024
Painting "Blackwell Lane, Gateshead, 1981" features in the Belonging exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.

The Lady In The Laing Art Gallery Preview, 1974

Epilogue

Brian Rankin

Charlie Rogers died on April 27, 2020 aged 90 and was buried at Saltwell Cemetery.

Thousands of his supporters have attended the World of Charlie Rogers exhibition at the Come View My Art Gallery in Gateshead. Many have expressed their admiration and support for a man they regard as one of the greatest northern artists of the 20th century. A substantial collection of Charlie's paintings and sketches is currently being collated and will be shared with the general public in due course.

The journey to preserve and promote Charlie's legacy has now begun.

The Story Continues

Back catalogue

Charlie Rogers was a highly prolific artist. A dedicated team of researchers have begun the important task of recovering and recording the Charlie Rogers back catalogue.

The next stage of the journey will be to uncover the contents of the Charlie Rogers sketchbooks.

Editor's Note

Annie Doyle

As a local author, I was excited to learn about a new art gallery on Sheriffs Highway in Gateshead. In September 2023, my friend Julie Pendleton introduced me to the owner, Brian Rankin. The gallery was immediately welcoming and as we drank our tea, Brian explained his inspiration for the space. It was somewhere I knew my dad, an artist, would have loved.

Dad was born in Annfield Plain, County Durham. Involved professionally in advertising and printing, he worked at Binns department store in Newcastle, as an apprentice ticket writer. World War II interrupted his apprenticeship but he returned to Binns to complete it after the war. He then worked at Kemsley House as a Graphic Artist, before moving to North Wales to work for McConnell's Advertising Agency. He returned to the northeast to work at the Newcastle Chronicle as a Graphic Artist before becoming Creative Services Manager. In the early 1970s, he became a self-employed commercial artist. Dad owed his affinity with fine art to early encouragement from his father and to the disciplined training of an old craftsman artist. An exhibitor at the Federation of Northern Art Societies Shows, he painted landscapes throughout Britain, though his favourite subject was his home county, whatever the weather.

In my first conversation with Brian, his passion for bringing Charlie Rogers' work into the light was evident. I agreed to collaborate with him to produce a book about Charlie, something I think Dad would have approved of. Along with Charlie, Dad was a regular contributor to the Scottish & Newcastle Brewery calendars. From anecdotal evidence and a doodle by Norman Cornish with Dad's handwriting on the back, I can say almost certainly that Dad was one of the Park Road Group artists. I do know he took his art more seriously than simply treating it as a hobby. Dad was one of the artists who gathered in the Bigg Market pubs including the Printers Pie. These artists included Harry and Alan Lord, Scott Dobson (Larn Yersel' Geordie), Alan Burdon, Dickie Mathieson, Bill Smith, Marshall Atkinson, Charlie Rogers and Norman Cornish. I'm sure Dad would have been a regular visitor to Brian's COME VIEW MY ART GALLERY, and I think he would have been proud to know about my involvement with this book about Charlie Rogers.

Alan Burdon 1927 - 2002

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the family of Norman Cornish for their guidance and support, particularly Mike Thornton, Norman's son-in-law.

I would also like to thank Michael Chaplin for writing the foreword and for his ongoing assistance, which has undoubtedly enhanced the integrity of the book.

The Team

The production of this book was made possible by the help, dedication and expertise of a very special group of people.

First, thank you to Charles Rogers Junior for allowing me into his home at the beginning of our journey. Thank you for allowing me to tell your father's story.

Thank you to Kathleen Andrucci who supported me throughout and introduced me to Charlie Junior. Without Kathleen this story would not have been told.

Thank you to Charlie's good friend Dennis Donnelly for agreeing to see me on three separate occasions, even when circumstances made it difficult. The stories Dennis allowed me to share are precious.

Thank you to the Friends of Saltwell Park, who immediately recognised the significance of the Charlie Rogers story, and for their collective passion and determination to help preserve one of Britain's finest Victorian public parks.

Thank you to Gateshead Libraries, to Graeme Whitfield at the Newcastle Chronicle and Journal, The Northern Echo, to members of the Gateshead Art Society for their help and support and to Tyne & Wear Museums curators Dr Esmé Whittaker, Keeper of Art (Art Galleries) and Amy Pargeter, Assistant Keeper of Art. Esmé gave her permission to include the Redheugh Crossroads image, which is on permanent display in the Shipley Art Gallery.

Thank you to my editor Gateshead author Annie Doyle who ensured the content of the book flowed like a mountain stream.

Thank you to my editor Alice Venus who took my words and shaped them into wonderful prose.

Thank you to Rob Barnes for patiently and meticulously shaping each page to create something special that readers will return to time and time again.

Thank you to Trevor Ermel whose camera captured the streets of Tyneside around the same time Charlie was painting them. Trevor's iconic images in this book complement and add context to Charlie's creations.

A special thank you to my wife Anita and son Daniel, who put up with a shadow of their husband and dad as I succumbed to the fire that was burning inside.

Most of all, thank you to numerous members of the public who came forward with their stories and words of support. Many took the time to visit the Come View My Art Gallery in Gateshead. They willingly shared personal anecdotes, loaned their paintings to my World of Charlie Rogers exhibition and encouraged my passion to showcase Charlie's masterpieces to a wider audience.

When I arrived at the Rogers family home one cold February morning in 2023, I knew I had an important decision to make. But as Charlie Junior guided me round his home, I quickly realised I could not walk away from the challenge of telling the story of Charlie Rogers.

To the many other supporters I have failed to mention, please be justly proud of the invaluable role you have played in helping me produce this book and promote Charlie's legacy.

Finally to Charlie himself: Sadly we never met, however I hope I have done you proud my friend.